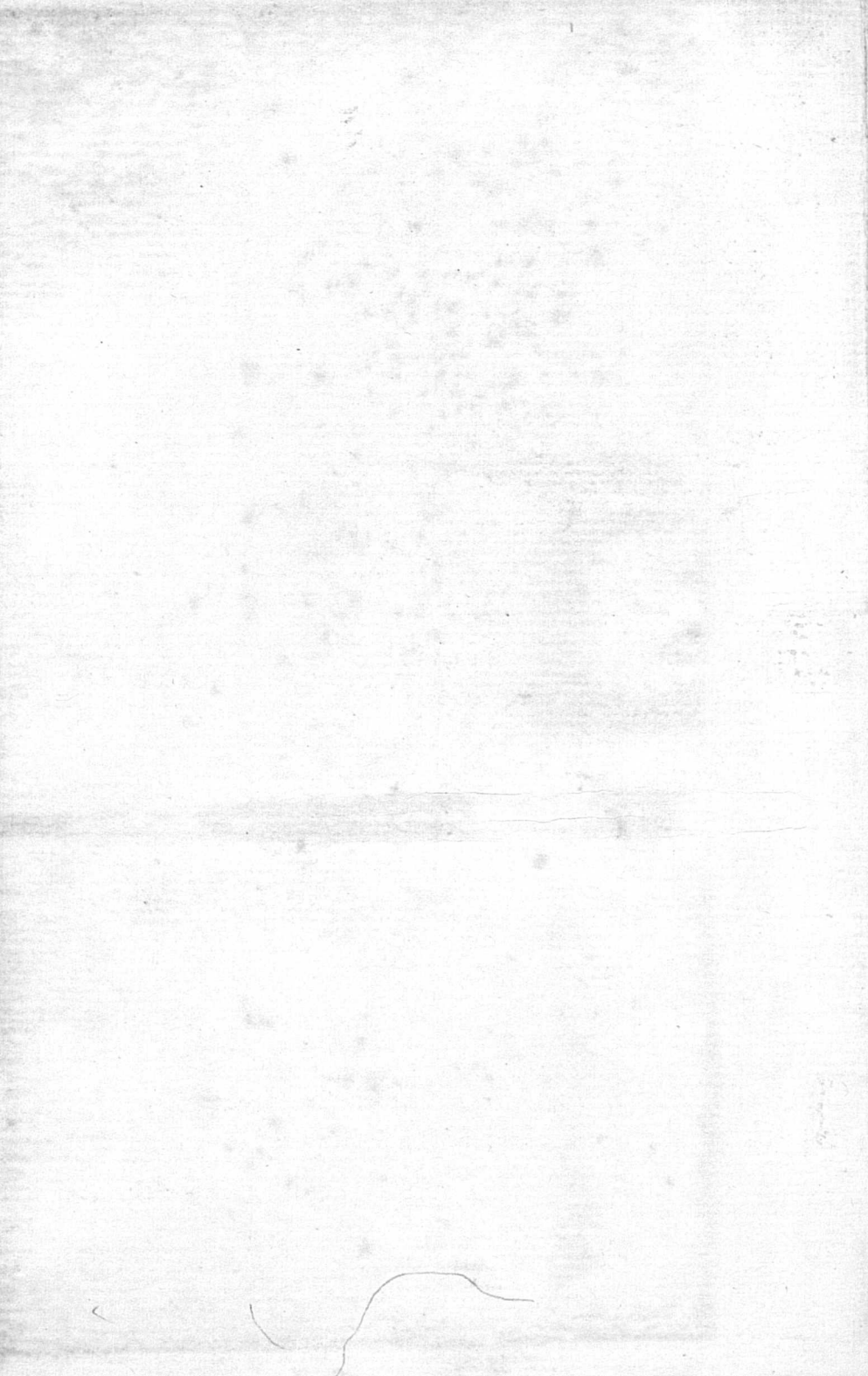


IN PRAISE OF SWITZERLAND  
BEING THE ALPS IN PROSE & VERSE







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IN PRAISE OF SWITZERLAND



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# IN PRAISE OF SWITZERLAND

BEING THE ALPS  
IN PROSE AND VERSE

BY

HAROLD SPENDER

MEMBER OF THE ALPINE CLUB

AUTHOR OF 'THROUGH THE HIGH PYRENEES'

'AT THE SIGN OF THE GUILLOTINE'

'THE ARENA,' ETC.

'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills : from whence cometh  
my help.'—PSALM CXXI.

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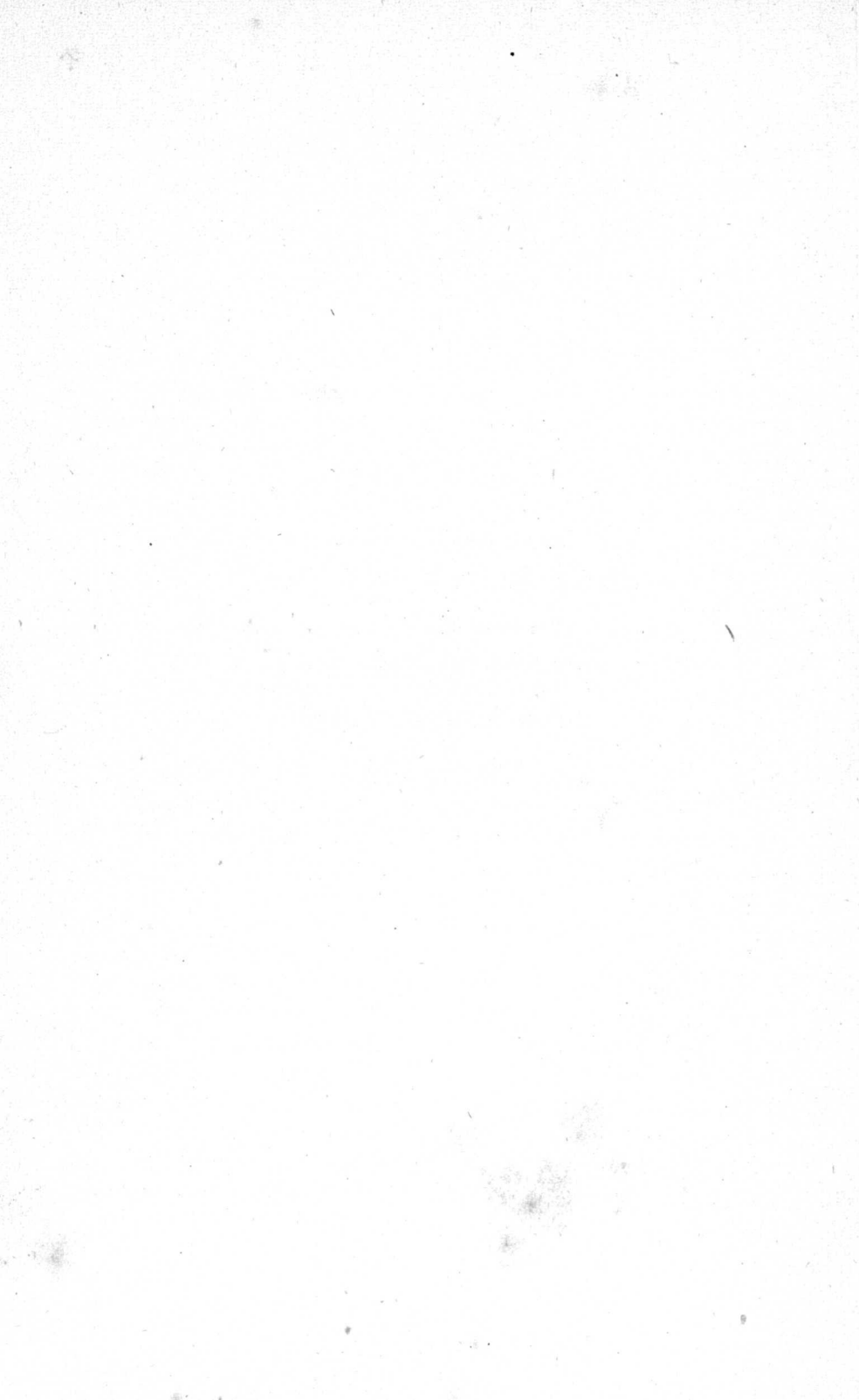
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TO MY FRIEND  
CHARLES E. SHEA  
THE COMPANION  
OF MANY HAPPY CLIMBS



## PREFACE

### A WORD ON THE ALPS.

IN the building of Europe, Nature placed as a guard and a barrier at the head of each southern tongue of land, a formidable screen of mountains—the Balkans, the Pyrenees and the Alps. Of all these ranges far and away the most formidable is the Alps. It stretches from sea to sea—from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic. It contains mountains of every shape and form, from the great rounded formation of Mont Blanc to the needle points of the Dolomites. It includes great lakes, rich valleys, wide mountain pastures. It leans down to grassy slopes and up to eternal snows. It comprises vast glaciers and huge plains. In building such a barrier Nature seems to have had some prophetic feeling that it was to be a protection for a race destined to give to Europe both a law and a religion.

For the human interest of the Alps is almost as great as their natural beauty. They protected that early civilisation of Rome from the invading masses of the barbarians, and afterwards sheltered the first flowering of Christianity from the rude hands of Northern heathenism. Not only so, but in modern days the Alps have themselves become the centre and home of a race wrought like beaten iron out of all that is strongest and most valiant in Europe. Throughout the centuries the Western races, whenever pressed by war and persecution, have found their refuge in the mountains. 'From the hills cometh my help!' cried the Psalmist in ancient days; and it was in the mountains that men in the Middle Ages found the only refuge from the inquisitor and the tyrant. Hence it is that the population of Switzerland, scattered through those valleys, divided from one another by mountain walls, include fragments of the hardiest stocks in



Europe. Thus it is that Switzerland has become the home of all the religions, races and tongues of Central Europe. In that wonderful country Protestantism is dovetailed into Catholicism, each in friendly neighbourhood. You find within these valleys at least three European languages—French, German and Italian—besides numerous patois, some of them survivals of the very languages spoken by the subject populations of the Roman Empire.

Pre-eminent in these respects, Switzerland is also alone among European nations in regard to its government. It presents to Europe the only instance of a country quite literally self-governed—governed, not by any quintessence of public opinion expressed in a representative assembly, but from year to year by the very voice of the people, directly expressed in votes on great public subjects. This actual and immediate form of self-government takes various shapes and images—in several cases being actually a government by assembly, and in other cases government by popular vote. But the result of it is that you have in Switzerland the most remarkable living example of a perfect and complete democratic State, content with its own laws, peaceful in its disposition, equally remote from the extremes of wealth or poverty, or from the violences of political or social opinion. It is a State of moderate and middle temper, immune by treaty from the shocks of war, and pursuing the even tenor of its way without rising to splendour of achievement or sinking to blackness of disaster.

This country has left a deep mark on literature. These dominating mountains, always the background of every scene in Northern Italy, the familiar setting of many of our greatest sacred pictures—these mountains have profoundly impressed the imagination of man. The first impression seems to have been that of terror, expressed by the men who lived in the warm lands to the South, in the first great literature of Italy, the now 'classic' poetry and prose of Ancient Rome. The prevailing mood of that literature is a sense of the coldness and austerity of these mighty heights.

With rare exceptions that continued to be the prevalent European mood right through the Middle Ages, and is still reflected in the

verse of Dante (1265-1321) and even later still, of our own Shakespeare (1564-1616).<sup>1</sup>

We do not, indeed, find this impression of fear at all at first passing away with the great growth of the artistic sense following on the Renaissance. There are two remarkable examples in literature of the effect produced by the Alps on the mind of the early modern man. One is in the diary of Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571).<sup>2</sup> That mighty artist, whose splendid sculpture still adorns the Piazza at Florence, has left us an account of a journey across the Alps. It is a narrative of pitiable terror, so overwhelming as to produce an entire blindness to the beauties of the scenery—a narrative in which all sense of delight is drowned and swamped in simple fear. The second example is to be found—two centuries later—in the diary of Horace Walpole (1717-1797).<sup>3</sup> He, too, crossed the Alps, and his impressions were little different from those of Cellini. As one reads his letters from the Alpine pass, one obtains a glimpse of that bright and urbane spirit brushing from his silken coat the grime and mud of the journey, longing for the plains, and hurrying through the Alps in all haste to leave them behind.

It is not, indeed, until the modern man is fully 'arrived,' with his new mastery over nature, and his new sympathy with great natural forces, that the Alps obtain their due in literature. The first great outburst of admiration is to be found in the prose of France and the poetry of England. In France it was a Swiss writer who taught the secret of the Alps—that wonderful Rousseau, who brought from Switzerland to France the very storm-wind of mountain liberty. In England it was that group of singers, often rather vaguely called the Poets of the Revolution, who first mirrored in verse the splendour of the Alpine vision—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, Keats. As the nineteenth century wore on, this hymn of admiration was taken up by all the poets, by Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, and Longfellow. At the same time it attained perhaps a literary form of almost equal beauty in the mighty prose of John Ruskin, who has left us a series of prose Alpine pictures that can be compared only to

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 81.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 248-9.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 251.

the paintings of his mighty artistic model and idol, Joseph William Turner.

So much for this literature of admiration, a mighty literature, of which the echoes still sound throughout the writings of the moderns. But there is another literature of the Alps. That is the literature of adventure. In its first stage the attitude of the modern man towards the Alps was still of admiration from a distance. The terror and horror had gone. Wonder and worship had taken its place. But it was still like the wonder of the ancients at Mount Sinai, which no ordinary man dare approach.

The first change in that attitude is contained in the remarkable descriptions of mountain expeditions by the famous Swiss botanist, De Saussure, who lived at Geneva during the second half of the eighteenth century. It was De Saussure's great leisure interest to climb and observe the mountains, and it was his most vital ambition to stand on the summit of Mont Blanc. He achieved that ambition, and he told the story in a very remarkable series of papers which, in simplicity and directness of descriptive power, still present a noble model for the modern mountaineer.<sup>1</sup>

De Saussure climbed Mont Blanc in 1787. The great troubles through which Europe passed during the following generation practically closed the Alps to modern adventure until 1820. Even then it was only gradually that Europe returned to the great Alpine enthusiasms of that group of early climbers—a group that included Windham, Balmat and Paccard. The first mark of this revived interest was contained in the work of a new group, this time of Englishmen, mostly men of high literary, scientific, or political distinction. The first fruits of this work became famous in a series of volumes under the title of *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*.

From 1840 onwards this literature began to grow at an increasing pace. The early awe of the mountains gave way before achievement. Achievement gave birth to a new and more intimate knowledge of the Alps. Between 1840 and 1870 practically all the highest peaks of Switzerland were conquered. Region after region delivered up its secrets—first the Oberland, then the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 85-95, 111-18.



Engadine and finally the Dolomites. A whole body of Englishmen mastered the secrets of snow-craft, and on their heels came another and even more adventurous band who developed a new school in crag-climbing.

The men who performed these feats began to describe them. The people who remained behind had an eager curiosity to know what these heights were like, and there was a continuous demand for the literature of Alpine adventure. Thus there grew up a new literature of the Alps, the literature of the *Alpine Journal* and its writers; the books of Whymper, Mummery, Forbes and Conway; and, perhaps most distinguished of all, the sketches of Tyndall and Leslie Stephen.<sup>1</sup>

What is the value of this literature as a contribution to English prose? Like the mountains with which it deals, it is strangely unequal. It rises to great heights and sinks to great depths. Its besetting sin is triviality. There is too much talk about the details of travel; about the meals, about the discomforts, about beds, about blisters, and above all, about fleas. If all the passages in Alpine literature written on these topics were collected together they would easily fill a volume bigger than the present.

But in spite of these grave defects, the English climbing literature of the last fifty years has given us some great passages. It can even be said, indeed, that mountain climbing has actually created writers. Men like Whymper and Mummery were not literary men. They were climbers who took to writing. But they had a great theme and a great experience. The mere greatness of the theme has made them conspicuous writers. They have been raised by the subject to a higher level. They have ascended with the mountains themselves to greater heights.

What then is this charm which has given a new quality to English prose literature? What is this theme that has made writers out of ordinary men, and has turned clay into porcelain—this theme able, in the words of Coleridge,

‘ . . . To stay the morning star  
In his steep course ’

What is it?

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 45, 73, etc.

No one can really answer that question who has not himself penetrated the recesses of the great mountains. Who but he knows the secret of the dawn over the Alps, when the great rock mountains flush like molten bronze and the pale snows blush like the cheek of a maiden? Who but he has looked down from some mighty height and seen the thick clouds break far below, revealing through the open window of that breach some nestling valley far beneath—some little Alpine village by the side of its green Alp, or some wood of thick pines by the side of its mountain torrent—all far, far below him, as if in another world? Or who but he has witnessed the terror and majesty of the Alpine storm, when the very rocks seem to shake with the wind, and the lightning seems to laugh with the pride and glory of its power? These things cannot be really communicated. They are the unique possession of those who have experienced them. It is only very dimly that words can give to the outer world some distant glimpses of the glories that the eye has seen and the tongue is stumbling to tell.

If my readers want to know the secret of the Alpine literature, they must look to it there—in the Alps themselves. If they would really understand its charm they must rise in the dim dawn, long before the sun has left its bed. They must grope their way over mountain paths while the mountains glimmer through the growing light. Or they must return in the sunset with the sense of danger past and labour done. They must see the lights of heaven come out one by one in the pale blue sky above them. It is those experiences that give the secret of Alpine literature, and explain why, in spite of all their defects and failings, the Alpine writers have contributed to English literature so much that is noble and sublime.

HAROLD SPENDER.

*P.S.*—I wish to make grateful acknowledgment of the kind assistance I have received in collecting the material for this work from Mr. C. H. Wollaston, the Secretary of the Alpine Club, Mr. Douglas Freshfield, who has carefully revised all the proofs, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. C. E. Shea, Lady Llewellyn Smith, Mr.

## PREFACE

xiii

Arnold Lunn, Sir E. T. Cook, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, Mr. Frederic Sherwood, the Recorder of Worcester, and my father Dr. J. K. Spender of Bath.

I wish also to thank the various authors and publishers for their courtesy in the matter of copyright, as shown in detail in the text.



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# IN PRAISE OF SWITZERLAND

## I

### THE ALPS IN ADMIRATION

COLERIDGE

[THIS great poem was written by the author of 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel'—Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)—in a period of travel during which he visited many parts of the Continent.]

HAST thou a charm to stay the morning-star  
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause  
On thy bald awful head, O sovran BLANC!  
The Arve and Arveiron at thy base  
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful Form!  
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,  
How silently! Around thee and above  
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,  
An ebon mass: methinks thou piercest it,  
As with a wedge! But when I look again,  
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,  
Thy habitation from eternity!  
O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee,  
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,  
Didst vanish from my thought: entranced in prayer  
I worshipped the Invisible alone.

'Hymn before  
Sunrise  
in the Vale  
of Chamouni'

Yet, like some sweet beguiling melody,  
So sweet, we know not we are listening to it,  
Thou, the meanwhile, wast blending with my Thought,

Yea, with my Life and Life's own secret joy :  
 Till the dilating Soul, enrapt, transfused,  
 Into the mighty vision passing—there  
 As in her natural form, swelled vast to Heaven !

Awake, my soul ! not only passive praise  
 Thou owest ! not alone these swelling tears,  
 Mute thanks and secret ecstasy ! Awake,  
 Voice of sweet song ! Awake, my heart, awake !  
 Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my Hymn.

Thou first and chief, sole sovereign of the Vale !  
 O struggling with the darkness all the night,  
 And visited all night by troops of stars,  
 Or when they climb the sky or when they sink :  
 Companion of the morning-star at dawn,  
 Thyself Earth's rosy star, and of the dawn  
 Co-herald : wake, O wake, and utter praise !  
 Who sank thy sunless pillars deep in Earth ?  
 Who fill'd thy countenance with rosy light ?  
 Who made thee parent of perpetual streams ?

And you, ye five wild torrents fiercely glad !  
 Who called you forth from night and utter death,  
 From dark and icy caverns called you forth,  
 Down those precipitous, black, jagged rocks,  
 For ever shattered and the same for ever ?  
 Who gave you your invulnerable life,  
 Your strength, your speed, your fury, and your joy,  
 Unceasing thunder and eternal foam ?  
 And who commanded (and the silence came),  
 Here let the billows stiffen, and have rest ?

Ye Ice-falls ! ye that from the mountain's brow  
 Adown enormous ravines slope amain—  
 Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,  
 And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge !  
 Motionless torrents ! silent cataracts !

Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven  
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun  
Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers  
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?—  
God! Let the torrents, like a shout of nations,  
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo,  
God!

God! sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice!  
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!  
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,  
And in their perilous fall shall thunder,  
God!

Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost!  
Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest!  
Ye eagles, play-mates of the mountain-storm!  
Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds!  
Ye signs and wonders of the element!  
Utter forth God, and fill the hills with praise!

Thou too, hoar Mount! with thy sky-pointing peaks,  
Oft from whose feet the avalanche, unheard,  
Shoots downward, glittering through the pure serene  
Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast—  
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou  
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low  
In adoration, upward from thy base  
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,  
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,  
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise,  
Rise like a cloud of incense from the Earth!  
Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,  
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,  
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,  
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun  
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises GOD.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

*Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni (1802).*

## RUSKIN

[These first passages on the Alps formed part of the great chapter with which Ruskin opened the second volume of the work that made his fame—*Modern Painters*. This second volume, published in 1846, made a noise in the world which shattered the secret of the authorship, and from that time forward John Ruskin stood forth as one of the greatest prose-writers in the English language.]

## Mountains

MOUNTAINS are, to the rest of the body of the earth, what violent muscular action is to the body of man. The muscles and tendons of its anatomy are, in the mountain, brought out with fierce and convulsive energy, full of expression, passion and strength; the plains and the lower hills are the repose and the effortless motion of the frame, when its muscles lie dormant and concealed beneath the lines of its beauty, yet ruling those grand lines in their every undulation. This, then, is the first grand principle of the truth of the earth. The spirit of the hills is action; that of the lowlands repose; and between these there is to be found every variety of motion and of rest; from the inactive plain, sleeping like the firmament, with cities for stars, to the fiery peaks, which, with heaving bosoms, and exulting limbs, with the clouds drifting like hair from their bright foreheads, lift up their Titan hands to Heaven, saying, 'I live for ever!'

Now, if I were giving a lecture on geology, and were searching for some means of giving the most faithful idea possible of the external appearance caused by this structure of the primary hills, I should throw my geological outlines aside, and take up Turner's vignette of the Alps at Daybreak. After what has been said, a single glance at it will be enough. Observe the exquisite decision with which the edge of the uppermost plank of the great peak is indicated by its clear dark side and sharp shadow; then the rise of the second low ridge on its side, only to descend again precisely in the same line; the two fissures of this peak, one pointing to its summit, the other rigidly parallel to the great slope which descends towards the sun; then the sharp white *aiguille* on the right, with

the great fissure from its summit, rigidly and severely square, as marked below, where another edge of rock is laid upon it. But this is not all; the black rock in the foreground is equally a member of the mass, its chief slope parallel with that of the mountain, and all its fissures and lines inclined in the same direction; and, to complete the mass of evidence more forcibly still, we have the dark mass on the left articulated with absolute right lines, as parallel as if they had been drawn with a ruler, indicating the tops of two of these huge plates or planks, pointing, with the universal tendency, to the great ridge, and intersected by fissures parallel to it. Throughout the extent of mountain, not one horizontal line, nor an approach to it, is discernible. This cannot be chance—it cannot be composition—it may not be beautiful—perhaps nature is very wrong to be so parallel, and very disagreeable in being so straight;—but this *is* nature, whether we admire it or not.

Now, whenever these vast peaks, rising from 12,000 to 24,000 **High Alps** feet above the sea, form part of anything like a landscape, that is to say, whenever the spectator beholds them from the region of vegetation, or even from any distance at which it is possible to get something like a view of their whole mass, they must be at so great a distance from him as to become aerial and faint in all their details. Their summits, and all those higher masses of whose character we have been speaking, can by no possibility be nearer to him than twelve or fifteen miles; to approach them nearer he must climb—must leave the region of vegetation, and must confine his view to a part, and that a very limited one, of the mountain he is ascending. Whenever, therefore, these mountains are seen over anything like vegetation, or are seen in mass, they *must* be in the far distance. Most artists would treat an horizon fifteen miles off very much as if it were mere air; and though the greater clearness of the upper air permits the high summits to be seen with extraordinary distinctness, yet they never can by any possibility have dark or deep shadows, or intense dark relief against a light. Clear they may be, but faint they must be, and their great and prevailing characteristic, as distinguished from other mountains, is a want of



apparent solidity. They rise in the morning light rather like sharp shades, cast up into the sky, than solid earth. Their lights are pure, roseate and cloud-like—their shadows transparent, pale and opalescent, and often indistinguishable from the air around them, so that the mountain-top is seen in the heaven only by its flakes of motionless fire.

The Alps  
and Snow

Every high Alp has as much snow upon it as it can hold or carry. It is not, observe, a mere coating of snow of given depth throughout, but it is snow loaded on until the rocks can hold no more. The surplus does not fall in the winter, because, fastened by continual frost, the quantity of snow which an Alp can carry is greater than each single winter can bestow; it falls in the first mild days of spring in enormous avalanches. Afterwards the melting continues, gradually removing from all the steep rocks the small quantity of snow which was all they could hold, and leaving them black and bare among the accumulated fields of unknown depth, which occupies the capacious valleys and less inclined superficies of the mountain.

Hence it follows that the deepest snow does not take nor indicate the actual forms of the rocks on which it lies, but it hangs from peak to peak in unbroken and sweeping festoons, or covers whole groups of peaks, which afford it sufficient hold, with vast and unbroken domes: these festoons and domes being guided in their curves, and modified in size, by the violence and prevalent direction of the winter winds.

We have, therefore, every variety of indication of the under mountain form, first the mere coating which is soon to be withdrawn, and which shows as a mere sprinkling or powdering after a storm on the higher peaks; then the shallow incrustation on the steep sides glazed by the running down of its frequent meltings, frozen again in the night; then the deeper snow more or less cramped or modified by sudden eminences of emergent rock, or hanging in fractured festoons and huge blue irregular cliffs on the mountain flanks, and over the edges and summits of their precipices in nodding drifts, far overhanging, like a cornice (perilous things to approach the edge of from above); finally the pure accumulation of overwhelming depth, smooth, sweeping, and almost cleftless,

and modified only by its lines of drifting. Countless phenomena of exquisite beauty belong to each of these conditions, not to speak of the transition of snow into ice at lower levels; but all on which I shall at present insist is that the artist should not think of his Alp merely as a white mountain, but conceive it as a group of peaks loaded with an accumulation of snow, and that especially he should avail himself of the exquisite curvatures, never failing, by which the snow unites and opposes the harsh and broken lines of the rock.

John Ruskin.  
*Modern Painters.*

## BYRON

[‘Childe Harold’ is the most famous poem of England’s stormiest poet (1788-1824), who became also, by the chance death of a relative, an English Peer, and finally died romantically while fighting for the freedom of Greece (Missolonghi, on 19th April, 1824). Published in 1812, ‘Childe Harold’ was the fruit of many travels over Europe during the years between 1809 and 1812.

Byron visited Switzerland again in 1816 with Shelley. ‘Manfred’ (see p. 273) was the result of this second visit.

‘Lake Leman’ is the lake known to most Englishmen as the Lake of Geneva.

LAKE LEMAN woos me with its crystal face,  
The mirror where the stars and mountains view  
The stillness of their aspect in each trace  
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue :  
There is too much of man here, to look through  
With a fit mind the might which I behold ;  
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew  
Thoughts hid, but not less cherish’d than of old,  
Ere mingling with the herd had penn’d me in their fold.

Childe Harold  
in the Alps

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind ;  
All are not fit with them to stir and toil,  
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind  
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil  
In one hot throng, where we become the spoil

## 8 IN PRAISE OF SWITZERLAND

Of our infection, till too late and long  
 We may deplore and struggle with the coil,  
 In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong  
 'Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years  
 In fatal penitence, and in the blight  
 Of our own soul turn all our blood to tears,  
 And colour things to come with hues of Night ;  
 The race of life becomes a hopeless flight  
 To those that walk in darkness : on the sea,  
 The boldest steer but where their ports invite,  
 But there are wanderers o'er Eternity  
 Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be.

Is it not better, then, to be alone,  
 And love Earth only for its earthly sake ?  
 By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,<sup>1</sup>  
 Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,  
 Which feeds it as a mother who doth make  
 A fair but froward infant her own care,  
 Kissing its cries away as these awake ;—  
 Is it not better thus our lives to wear,  
 Than join the crushing crowd, doom'd to inflict or bear ?

I live not in myself, but I become  
 Portion of that around me ; and to me,  
 High mountains are a feeling, but the hum  
 Of human cities torture : I can see  
 Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be  
 A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,  
 Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,  
 And, with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain  
 Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

<sup>1</sup> The colour of the Rhone at Geneva is blue, to a depth of tint which I have never seen equalled in water, salt or fresh, except in the Mediterranean and Archipelago. (Byron's Note.)

And thus I am absorb'd, and this is life :  
I look upon the peopled desert past,  
As on a place of agony and strife,  
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,  
To act and suffer, but remount at last  
With a fresh pinion ; which I felt to spring,  
Though young, yet waxing vigorous as the blast  
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,  
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free  
From what it hates in this degraded form,  
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be  
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—  
When elements to elements conform,  
And dust is as it should be, shall it not  
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm ?  
The bodiless thought ? the Spirit of each spot ?  
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot ?

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part  
Of me and of my soul, as I of them ?  
Is not the love of these deep in my heart  
With a pure passion ? should I not contemn  
All objects, if compared with these ? and stem  
A tide of suffering, rather than forego  
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm  
Of those whose eyes are only turned below,  
Gazing upon the ground, with which thoughts dare not glow ?

. . . . .  
Clear, placid Leman ! thy contrasted lake,  
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing  
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake  
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.  
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing

To waft me from distraction ; once I loved  
 Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring  
 Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,  
 That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

It is the hush of night, and all between  
 Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,  
 Mellow'd and mingling, yet distinctly seen,  
 Save darken'd Jura, whose capt heights appear  
 Precipitously steep : and drawing near,  
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,  
 Of flowers yet fresh with childhood ; on the ear  
 Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,  
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more.

He is an evening reveller, who makes  
 His life an infancy, and sings his fill ;  
 At intervals, some bird from out the brakes  
 Starts into voice a moment, then is still.  
 There seems a floating whisper on the hill,  
 But that is fancy, for the starlight dews  
 All silently their tears of love instil,  
 Weeping themselves away, till they infuse  
 Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

Ye stars ! which are the poetry of heaven  
 If in your bright leaves we would read the fate  
 Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,  
 That in our aspirations to be great,  
 Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,  
 And claim a kindred with you ; for ye are  
 A beauty and a mystery, and create  
 In us such love and reverence from afar,  
 That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,  
 But breathless, as we grow when feeling most ;  
 And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep :—

All heaven and earth are still : from the high host  
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,  
All is concenter'd in a life intense,  
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,  
But hath a part of being, and a sense  
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt  
In solitude, where we are *least* alone ;  
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,  
And purifies from self : it is a tone,  
The soul and source of music, which makes known  
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,  
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,  
Binding all things with beauty ;—'twould disarm  
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.

Not vainly did the early Persian make  
His altar the high places and the peak  
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take  
A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek  
The Spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,  
Uprear'd of human hands. Come, and compare  
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,  
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,  
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer !

The sky is changed !—and such a change ! O night,  
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,  
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light  
Of a dark eye in woman ! Far along,  
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among  
Leaps the live thunder ! Not from one lone cloud,  
But every mountain now hath found a tongue ;  
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,  
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud !



And this is in the night :—Most glorious night !  
 Thou wert not sent for slumber ! Let me be  
 A sharer in thy fierce and far delight—  
 A portion of the tempest and of thee !  
 How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,  
 And the big rain comes dancing to the earth !  
 And now again 'tis black,—and now, the glee  
 Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,  
 As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between  
 Heights which appear as lovers who have parted  
 In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,  
 That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted !  
 Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted  
 Love was the very root of the fond rage  
 Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed :  
 Itself expired, but leaving them an age  
 Of years all winters—war within themselves to wage.

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,  
 The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand :  
 For here, not one, but many, make their play,  
 And fling their thunderbolts from hand to hand,  
 Flashing and cast around : of all the band,  
 The brightest through these parted hills hath fork'd  
 His lightnings—as if he did understand  
 That in such gaps as desolation work'd,  
 There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurk'd.

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings ! ye  
 With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul  
 To make these felt and feeling, well may be  
 Things that have made me watchful ; the far roll  
 Of your departing voices, is the knoll

Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.  
But where of ye, O tempests ! is the goal?  
Are ye like those within the human breast?  
Or do ye find at length, like eagles, some high nest?

Lausanne ! and Ferney ! ye have been the abodes  
Of names which unto you bequeath'd a name ;<sup>1</sup>  
Mortals, who sought and found, by dangerous roads,  
A path to perpetuity of fame :  
They were gigantic minds, and their steep aim  
Was, Titan-like, on daring doubts to pile  
Thoughts which should call down thunder, and the flame  
Of Heaven again assail'd, if Heaven the while  
On man and man's research could deign do more than smile.

The one was fire and fickleness, a child  
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind  
A wit as various,—gay, grave, sage, or wild,—  
Historian, bard, philosopher combined :  
He multiplied himself among mankind,  
The Proteus of their talents : But his own  
Breathed most in ridicule,—which, as the wind,  
Blew where it listed, laying all things prone,—  
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.

The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,  
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,  
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,  
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,  
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ;  
The lord of irony,—that master-spell,  
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,  
And doom'd him to the zealot's ready hell,  
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire and Gibbon (Byron's note).

Yet, peace be with their ashes,—for by them,  
 If merited, the penalty is paid ;  
 It is not ours to judge—far less condemn ;  
 The hour must come when such things shall be made  
 Known unto all, or hope and dread allay'd  
 By slumber on one pillow, in the dust,  
 Which, thus much we are sure, must lie decay'd ;  
 And when it shall revive, as is our trust,  
 'Twill be to be forgiven, or suffer what is just.

But let me quit man's works, again to read  
 His Maker's spread around me, and suspend  
 This page, which from my reveries I feed,  
 Until it seems prolonging without end.  
 The clouds above me to the white Alps tend,  
 And I must pierce them, and survey whate'er  
 May be permitted, as my steps I bend  
 To their most great and growing region, where  
 The earth to her embrace compels the powers of air !

Canto III. 68-75, 85-96, 105-109.

[To these passages I may add the two stanzas in which Byron makes a direct reference to the Alps.]

But these recede. Above me are the Alps,  
 The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls  
 Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,  
 And throned Eternity in icy halls  
 Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls  
 The avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow !  
 All that expounds the spirit, yet appals,  
 Gather around these summits, as they shew  
 How Earth can pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

Once more upon the woody Apennine,  
 The infant Alps, which—had I not before  
 Gazed on their mightier parents, where the pine  
 Sits on more shaggy summits, and where roar

The thundering lawine—might be worshipp'd more ;  
 But I have seen the soaring Jungfrau rear  
 Her never-trodden snow, and seen the hoar  
 Glaciers of bleak Mount Blanc both far and near  
 And in Chimari heard the thunder-hills of fear.

Cantos III. 62, IV. 73.

Lord Byron.

*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.*

## FREDERIC HARRISON

[From a book of infinite charm, recently published by one of those veterans who survive from the days when the climbing of mountains went hand in hand with literature. No book of recent years has breathed more truly the spirit of the Mountain Pan.] The Alps in  
Memory

I LIVE again—I have breathed once more the air of the 'iced mountain top'—my heart expands at the sight of my beloved Alps. After fifty-six years the mountain fever throbs in my old veins. Bunyan's Pilgrim did not hail the vision of the Delectable Hills with more joy and consolation. A Letter

Yes ! you were wise to urge me to seek rest and change of thought in my old haunts, even though you were unable to travel yourself. There is no such rest, such change, in the world. I have been here but ten days, and it seems ten months. The air, the sounds, the landscape, the life—all are new—and yet how full of old memories—how fresh to-day and yet how far off in remembrance. Half a century has not dimmed the glory of these eternal rocks, of these familiar marvels. And old age only makes us more able to drink in all their charm, for it makes us dwell on them with more patient love and reverence, with a wider knowledge of all that Nature means, all that it inspires, of all the myriad chords whereby it attunes the soul.

Once more—perhaps for the last time—I listen to the unnumbered tinkling of the cow-bells on the slopes—'the sweet bells of the sauntering herd'—to the music of the cicadas in the sunshine, and the shouts of the neatherd lads, echoing back from Alp to Alp. I hear the burbling of the mountain rill, I watch the

emerald moss of the pastures gleaming in the light, and now and then the soft white mist creeping along the glen, as our poet says, 'puts forth an arm and creeps from pine to pine.' And see the wild flowers, even in this waning season of the year, the delicate lilac of the dear autumn crocus, which seems to start up elf-like out of the lush grass, the coral beads of the rowan, and the beech-trees, just begun to wear their autumn jewelry of old gold.

As I stroll about these hills, more leisurely, more thoughtfully than I used to do of old in my hot mountaineering days, I have tried to think out what it is that makes the Alpine landscape so marvellous a tonic to the spirit—what is the special charm of it to those who have once felt all its inexhaustible magic. Other lands have rare beauties, wonders of their own, sights to live in the memory for ever. In France, in Italy, in Spain, in Greece and in Turkey, I hold in memory many a superb landscape. From boyhood upwards I thirsted for all kinds of Nature's gifts, whether by sea, or by river, lake, mountain, or forest. For sixty years at least I have roved about the white cliffs, the moors, the riversides, lakes and pastures of our own islands from Penzance to Cape Wrath, from Beachy Head to the Shetlands. I love them all. But they cannot touch men, as do the Alps, with the sense at once of inexhaustible loveliness and of a sort of conscious sympathy with every fibre of man's heart and brain. Why then is this so?

I find it in the immense range of the moods in which Nature is seen in the Alps, at least by those who have fully absorbed all the forms, sights, sounds, wonders, and adventures they offer. An hour's walk will show them all in profound contrast and yet in exquisite harmony. The Alps form a book of Nature as wide and as mysterious as Life.

Earth has no scenes of placid fruitfulness more balmy than the banks of one of the larger lakes, crowded with vineyards, orchards, groves and pastures down to the edge of its watery mirror, wherein, beside a semi-tropical vegetation, we see the image of some mediaeval castle, of some historic tower, and thence the eye strays up to sunless gorges, swept with avalanches and streaming with feathery cascades; and higher yet one sees against the sky line

ranges of terrific crags, girt with glaciers, and so often wreathed in storm clouds.

All that Earth has of the most sweet, softest, easiest, most suggestive of languor and love, of fertility and abundance—here is seen in one vision beside all that Nature has most hard, most cruel, most unkind to Man—where life is one long battle with a frost-bitten soil, and every peasant's hut has been built up stone by stone, and log by log, with sweat and groans, and wrecked hopes. In a few hours one may pass from an enchanted garden, where every sense is satiated, and every flower and leaf and gleam of light is intoxication, up into a wilderness of difficult crags and yawning glaciers, which men can reach only by hard-earned skill, tough muscles and iron nerves.

All this is seen in the Alps in one vision, and floods the mind with those infinitely varied contrasts which roll on side by side in the aspects of Nature and in the course of Human Life. To know, to feel, to understand the Alps is to know, to feel, to understand Humanity.

Frederic Harrison.

*My Alpine Jubilee.* By kind permission of  
the Author and Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co.

## WORDSWORTH

[William Wordsworth (1770-1850)—the chief of the 'Lake' School of English Poets—knew the Alps well. He visited them often, and was passionately interested in their liberties. See his poems on Swiss liberties in *The Alps in History*, p. 256.] **Wordsworth on the Alps**

By antique Fancy trimmed—though lowly, bred  
To dignity—in thee, O Schwytz! are seen  
The genuine features of the golden mean;  
Equality by Prudence governed,  
Or jealous nature ruling in her stead;  
And, therefore, art thou blest with peace, serene  
As that of the sweet fields and meadows green  
In unambitious compass round thee spread.  
Majestic Berne, high on her guardian steep,

**'The Town of  
Schwytz'**



Holding a central station of command,  
 Might well be styled this noble body's head;  
 Thou, lodged 'mid mountainous entrenchments deep,  
 Its heart; and ever may the heroic land  
 Thy name, O Schwytz, in happy freedom keep.

Wordsworth.

The 'Ranz  
 des Vaches'

I LISTEN—but no faculty of mine  
 Avails those modulations to detect,  
 Which, heard in foreign lands, the Swiss affect  
 With tenderest passion; leaving him to pine  
 (So fame reports) and die;—his sweet-breathed kine  
 Remembering, and green Alpine pastures decked  
 With vernal flowers. Yet may we not reject  
 The tale as fabulous.—Here while I recline  
 Mindful how others love this simple strain,  
 Even here, upon this glorious mountain (named  
 Of God himself from dread pre-eminence)  
 Aspiring thoughts, by memory reclaimed,  
 Yield to the music's touching influence,  
 And joys of distant home my heart enchain.

Wordsworth.

'The Staub-  
 Bach'

TRACKS let me follow far from human-kind  
 Which these illusive greetings may not reach;  
 Where only nature tunes her voice to teach  
 Careless pursuits, and raptures unconfined.  
 No mermaid warbles (to allay the wind  
 That drives some vessel toward a dangerous beach)  
 More thrilling melodies! no caverned witch,  
 Chanting a love-spell, ever intertwined  
 Notes shrill and wild with art more musical!  
 Alas! that from the lips of abject want  
 And idleness in tatters mendicant  
 The strain should flow—enjoyment to enthrall,  
 And with regret and useless pity haunt  
 This bold, this pure, this sky-born waterfall.

Wordsworth.

—BROOK and road

'The Simplon  
Pass'

Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass,  
And with them did we journey several hours  
At a slow step. The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed.  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,  
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,  
Black, drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity ;  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

Wordsworth.

[This church was almost destroyed by lightning a few years ago, but the altar and the image of the patron saint were untouched. The mount, upon which the summit of the church is built, stands amid the intricacies of the Lake of Lugano ; and is, from a hundred points of view, its principal ornament, rising to the height of 2000 feet, and on one side nearly perpendicular. The ascent is toilsome ; but the traveller who performs it will be amply rewarded. Splendid fertility, rich woods, and dazzling waters, seclusion and confinement of view contrasted with sealike extent of plain fading into sky ; and this again, in an opposite quarter, with an horizon of the loftiest and boldest Alps—unite in composing a prospect more diversified by magnificence, beauty and sublimity, than perhaps any other point in Europe of so inconsiderable an elevation commands.—Wordsworth's note.]

'The Church  
of San  
Salvador,  
seen from  
the Lake of  
Lugano'

THOU sacred Pile ! whose turrets rise  
From yon steep mountain's loftiest stage,

Guarded by lone San Salvador ;  
Sink (if thou must) as heretofore,  
To sulphurous bolts a sacrifice,  
But ne'er to human rage !

On Horeb's top, on Sinai, deigned  
To rest the universal Lord ;  
Why leap the fountains from their cells  
Where everlasting Bounty dwells ?  
—That, while the creature is sustained,  
His God may be adored.

Cliffs, fountains, rivers, seasons, times,  
Let all remind the soul of heaven ;  
Our slack devotion needs them all ;  
And Faith, so oft of sense the thrall,  
While she, by aid of Nature, climbs,  
May hope to be forgiven.

Glory, and patriotic love,  
And all the pomps of this frail 'spot  
Which men call earth,' have yearned to seek,  
Associate with the simply meek,  
Religion in the sainted grove,  
And in the hallowed grot.

Thither, in time of adverse shocks,  
Of fainting hopes and backward wills,  
Did mighty Tell repair of old—  
A hero cast in Nature's mould,  
Deliverer of the steadfast rocks  
And of the ancient hills.

*He*, too, of battle-martyrs chief !  
Who, to recall his daunted peers,  
For victory shaped an open space,  
By gathering with a wide embrace,  
Into his single heart, a sheaf  
Of fatal Austrian spears.

Wordsworth.

FROM the fierce aspect of this river throwing  
 His giant body o'er the steep rock's brink,  
 Back in astonishment and fear we shrink :  
 But, gradually a calmer look bestowing,  
 Flowers we espy beside the torrent growing ;  
 Flowers that peep forth from many a cleft and chink,  
 And, from the whirlwind of his anger, drink  
 Hues ever fresh, in rocky fortress blowing :  
 They suck, from breath that threatening to destroy  
 Is more benignant than the dewy eve,  
 Beauty, and life, and motions as of joy :  
 Nor doubt but He to whom yon pine-trees nod  
 Their heads in sign of worship, Nature's God,  
 These humbler adorations will receive.

Wordsworth.

DEM  
 ANDENKEN  
 MEINES FREUNDES  
 ALOYS REDING.  
 MDCCCXVIII.

'Memorial  
 near the  
 outlet of the  
 Lake of Thun'

AROUND a wild and woody hill  
 A gravelled pathway treading,  
 We reached a votive stone that bears  
 The name of Aloys Reding.

Well judged the friend who placed it there  
 For silence and protection ;  
 And haply with a finer care  
 Of dutiful affection.

The sun regards it from the west,  
 Sinking in summer glory ;  
 And, while he sinks, affords a type  
 Of that pathetic story.

And oft he tempts the patriot Swiss  
 Amid the grove to linger ;  
 Till all is dim, save this bright stone  
 Touched by his golden finger.

Wordsworth.

'On the Lake  
of Brienz'

'WHAT know we of the blest above  
But that they sing and that they love?'  
Yet, if they ever did inspire  
A mortal hymn, or shaped the choir,  
Now, where those harvest damsels float  
Homeward in their rugged boat,  
(While all the ruffling winds are fled,  
Each slumbering on some mountain's head),  
Now, surely, hath that gracious aid  
Been felt, that influence is displayed.  
Pupils of Heaven, in order stand  
The rustic maidens, every hand  
Upon a sister's shoulder laid,—  
To chant, as glides the boat along,  
A simple, but a touching, song;  
To chant, as angels do above,  
The melodies of peace in love!

Wordsworth.

'Engelberg :  
The Hill of  
Angels'

FOR gentlest uses, oft-times nature takes  
The work of Fancy from her willing hands;  
And such a beautiful creation makes  
As renders needless spells and magic wands,  
And for the boldest tale belief commands.  
When first mine eyes beheld that famous hill  
The sacred Engelberg, celestial bands,  
With intermingling motions soft and still,  
Hung round its top, on wings that changed their hues at will,  
Clouds do not name those visitants; they were  
The very angels whose authentic lays,  
Sung from that heavenly ground in middle air,  
Made known the spot where piety should raise  
A holy structure to the Almighty's praise.  
Resplendent apparition! if in vain  
My ears did listen, 'twas enough to gaze;  
And watch the slow departure of the train,  
Whose skirts the glowing mountain thirsted to detain.

Wordsworth.

How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright  
 The effluence from yon distant mountain's head,  
 Which, strewn with snow as smooth as heaven can shed,  
 Shines like another sun—on mortal sight  
 Uprisen, as if to check approaching Night,  
 And all her twinkling stars. Who now would tread,  
 If so he might, yon mountain's glittering head—  
 Terrestrial—but a surface, by the flight  
 Of sad mortality's earth-sullying wing,  
 Unswept, unstained? Nor shall the aerial powers  
 Dissolve that beauty—destined to endure  
 White, radiant, spotless, exquisitely pure,  
 Through all vicissitudes—till genial Spring  
 Have filled the laughing vales with welcome flowers.

Wordsworth.

## C. E. MATHEWS

[Mr. C. E. Mathews was one of the most conspicuous figures in the Alpine Club from 1880 to 1900, a distinguished President, a delightful speaker, and a passionate lover of the mountains. *The Annals of Mont Blanc* is a classic on the greatest mountain in Europe. It still holds the field as the best book on the best mountain.]

I ENVY the pioneers of the future. Other men are young now, but we no more. But the old school will never think any mountain so interesting and so beautiful as Mont Blanc. Tourists can never spoil it. Huts can never wholly vulgarise it. 'Age cannot wither nor custom stale its infinite variety.' The tracks of summer are obliterated by the snows of winter, and each new man, each new generation of men, will find in it, as we have found, the same interest and the same charm.

The Alps in  
the Future

The men of old time used to say that no one could climb Parnassus without becoming either a poet or mad. It was indeed asserted forty years ago in a well-known guide-book, that most of those who had hitherto ascended Mont Blanc had been persons of unsound mind. It is true that if a man is capable of poetic feeling

at all, the study of the great mountains will encourage and develop it, and the madness, after all, has not been without method.

Mountaineering has its lights and shades, but it is a pursuit which has added greatly and permanently to the sum of human happiness. Who shall measure the amount? Who is there who can sleep on a glacier in the moonlight, or by the camp fire amongst the lonely hills; who can listen to the music of the wind against the crags, or of the water falling far below; who can traverse the vast white solitudes in the night time under the silent stars; who can watch the rose of dawn in the east, or the great peaks flushed with carmine at sunset, without thoughts which it seems almost sacrilege to put into words, without memories which can never be effaced, for they sink into the soul!

Mont Blanc has now been known to five successive generations. Men may come and men may go, but its mighty summit 'abides untroubled by the coming and going of the world.' And to those who know it well and love it dearly, come often, in quiet hours, teeming thoughts which swarm like bees; sunny memories of successful endeavour, of transcendent beauty, and of priceless friendships, which have added health, and sweetness, and happiness to life.

C. E. Mathews.

*The Annals of Mont Blanc.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

### OLIVER GOLDSMITH

[Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) wandered for about a year during his youth in France, Switzerland, and Italy, and always all through his life carried with him the impressions of these travels. I give here the famous description of Switzerland and the Swiss in the *Traveller*, the poem (written in 1764) which attracted the attention of Dr. Johnson, and brought Goldsmith into the circle of the Johnson Club.

This passage gives an interesting record of the view taken of the Swiss by the English in the eighteenth century.]

The Alps of  
Simplicity.

My soul, turn from them, turn we to survey  
Where rougher climes a nobler race display;  
Where the bleak Swiss their stormy mansion tread,



And force a churlish soil for scanty bread.  
No product here the barren hills afford,  
But man and steel, the soldier and his sword :  
No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,  
But winter lingering chills the lap of May :  
No zephyr fondly sues the mountain's breast,  
But meteors glare, and stormy glooms invest.

Yet, still, e'en here content can spread a charm,  
Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm.  
Though poor the peasant's hut, his feasts tho' small,  
He sees his little lot the lot of all ;  
Sees no contiguous palace rear its head  
To shame the meanness of his humble shed ;  
No costly lord the sumptuous banquet deal  
To make him loath his vegetable meal ;  
But calm, and bred in ignorance and toil,  
Each wish contracting fits him to the soil.  
Cheerful at morn he wakes from short repose,  
Breathes the keen air, and carols as he goes ;  
With patient angle trolls the finny deep ;  
Or drives his vent'rous plough-share to the steep ;  
Or seeks the den where snow-tracks mark the way,  
And drags the struggling savage into day.  
At night returning, every labour sped,  
He sits him down the monarch of a shed ;  
Smiles by his cheerful fire, and round surveys  
His children's looks, that brighten at the blaze ;  
While his lov'd partner, boastful of her hoard,  
Displays her cleanly platter on the board :  
And haply too some pilgrim, thither led,  
With many a tale repays the nightly bed.

Thus every good his native wilds impart  
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart ;  
And e'en those ills that round his mansion rise  
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies.  
Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,  
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms ;

And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,  
 Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,  
 So the loud torrent and the whirlwind's roar  
 But bind him to his native mountains more.

E'en now, where Alpine solitudes ascend,  
 I sit me down a pensive hour to spend ;  
 And plac'd on high above the storm's career,  
 Look downward where an hundred realms appear ;  
 Lakes, forests, cities, plains extending wide,  
 The pomp of kings, the shepherd's humbler pride.

Oliver Goldsmith.  
*The Traveller.*

### LESLIE STEPHEN

[Leslie Stephen was one of the most gifted of that group of literary and scientific men who formed the stars of the Alpine Club between 1860 and 1900, and raised mountaineering to the first rank as a great English sport. His climbing essays are still among the most fascinating Alpine prose-writings.]

#### **The Alps as a Playground**

THE Alps, as yet, remain. They are places of refuge where we may escape from ourselves and from our neighbours. There we can breathe air that has not passed through a million pair of lungs ; and drink water in which the acutest philosophers cannot discover the germs of indescribable diseases. There the blessed fields are in no danger of being 'huzzed and mazed with the devil's own team.' Those detestable parallelograms, which cut up English scenery with their monotonous hedgerows, are sternly confined to the valley. The rocks and the glaciers have a character of their own, and are not undergoing the wearisome process of civilisation. They look down upon us as they looked down upon Hannibal, and despise our wretched burrowings at their base. Human society has been adapted to the scenery, and has not forced the scenery to wear its livery. It is true, and it is sad, that the mountains themselves are coming down ; day by day the stones are rattling in multitudes from the flanks of the mighty cliffs ; and even the glaciers, it would seem, are retreating sulkily into the deeper

fastnesses of the high valleys. And yet we may safely say, as we can say of little else, that the Alps will last our time. They have seen out a good many generations, and poets yet unborn will try to find something new to say in their honour.

Leslie Stephen.

*The Playground of Europe.*

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### A. E. MUMMERY

[Mr. A. E. Mummery (1855-1895) was one of the most prominent of the 'end of the century' school of climbers. These men were mostly rock-climbers, and carried the wrestle with the perpendicular to the point nearest to the impossible. Mr. Mummery trained himself as a climber on the chalk cliffs of Dover. In the Alps he achieved many notable ascents, among them the Zmutt ridge of the Matterhorn and the Grépon crack. He perished in the Himalayas in an expedition to climb Nanga Parbat. Mr. Mummery had twice tried to scale Nanga Parbat on one side and been twice defeated. Impatient to reach the other side, he allowed his friends—one of whom was Mr. Hastings—to go round by the valleys and himself set out to cross the mountains by an unknown route. He and his two Ghoorkas were never seen or heard of again.]

For myself I am fain to confess a deplorable weakness in my character. No sooner have I ascended a peak than it becomes a friend, and delightful as it may be to seek 'fresh woods and pastures new,' in my heart of hearts I long for the slopes of which I know every wrinkle, and on which each crag awakens memories of mirth and laughter and of the friends of long ago. As a consequence of this terrible weakness, I have been no less than seven times on the top of the Matterhorn. I have sat on the summit with my wife when a lighted match would not flicker in the windless air, and I have been chased from its shattered crest and down the Italian ridge by the mad fury of thunder, lightning and whirling snow. Yet each memory has its own peculiar charm, and the wild music of the hurricane is hardly a less delight than the glories of a perfect day. The idea which cleaves unto the orthodox mountaineer that a single ascent, on one day, in one year, enables that same mountaineer to know and realise how that peak looks on all other

The  
Mountains  
as Friends

days, in all other years, suggests that he is still wallowing in the lowest bogs of Philistinism. It is true that the crags and pinnacles are the same, but their charm and beauty lies in the ever-changing light and shade, in the mists which wreath round them, in the huge cornices and pendant icicles, in all the varying circumstance of weather, season and hour. Moreover, it is not merely that the actual vision impressed on the retina reflects every mood and change of summer storm and sunshine; but the observer himself in hardly less inconstant. On one day he is dominated by the tingling horror of the precipice, the gaunt bareness of the stupendous cliffs, or the deadly rush of the rocks when some huge block breaks from its moorings and hurtles through the air—a fit emblem of resistless wrath. On yet another day he notices none of these things; lulled by the delicate tints of opal and azure, he revels in the vaporous softness of the Italian valleys, in the graceful sweep on the wind-drifted snow, or even in the tiny flowers wedged in the joints of the granite. While the mountain may sometimes impress its mood on the spectator, as often the spectator only sees that which harmonises with his own. A man may doubtless be so constructed that

‘A primrose by the river’s brim  
A yellow primrose is to him,’

and in conceivable circumstance or time could it ever be aught else; but others more happily constituted, who can rejoice in the beauty of the external world, are scarcely likely to feel the ‘taint of staleness’ no matter how thoroughly they may know the substantial basis of rock and ice on which the sun and cloud, mist, air, and sky are ever weaving the glory of the view.

A. E. Mummery.

*My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

### GUIDO REY

[Guido Rey is one of the most distinguished of the Italian group of climbers—equally distinguished as a climber and a writer.]

**The Exalta-  
tion of the  
Mountains**

BUT the mountains are so kindly and so great that they reject none of those who turn to them, and they are good to all: to the

men of science who come to study them : to the painters and the poets who seek an inspiration in them : to the sturdy climbers who zealously seek violent exercise, and to the weary who flee from the heat and the turmoil of the city to refresh themselves at this pure source of physical and moral health. Mountaineering is merely a more vigorous, more complete form of this health.

I wish the idea, according to which climbers are a small company of conceited individuals, who are jealous of their mountains, and who live in a selfish atmosphere of petty vanities, could be set aside. I wish it were possible to break up once for all the ring of distrust and indifference which still surrounds them. Mountaineering is a human pursuit, which is as natural as walking, seeing and thinking ; as human as all passions are, with its weaknesses, its enthusiasms, its joys, and its disillusiones, and, like all other passions, it exalts and matures the human mind. I would that I could reduce to its proper terms the conception of our ideals, which do not differ from those which impel men to seek the nobler and loftier things of life ; that I could show climbers to be neither wiser nor more foolish than other men. The only difference is that where others believe the limit of the habitable world to lie, climbers find the gates of a marvellous region, that is full of charming visions, and in which hours pass like minutes, and days are as long and complete as a year ; and that they take with them through those gates only the better part of themselves, wherefore life there appears to them purer and more full of beauty. They wish that all men could share their dreams, and by bivouacking high upon the rocks they seek to induce others to endure to sleep on the hay in a chalet or on the planks of a hut. By climbing to a height of 13,000 feet they try to lead others to go to 7,000 or 8,000. They surmount a hundred difficulties that others may be tempted to surmount one.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

## DOUGLAS FRESHFIELD

[Mr. Douglas Freshfield is one of the most brilliant survivors of the nineteenth-century group of Alpine climbers. This is from a charming early book of his—*The Italian Alps*. It is an early defence of the Alpine cult, at a time when it was much assailed.]

**Alp Worship** THE true lover of the Alps is not necessarily disposed to be arrogant in his faith or to wish all the world of the same mind. While he knows that to him the mountains are sympathetic, he admits that they have also an unsympathetic side which is the first to present itself to many. He recognises in the hill country a type of nature, free, vigorous and healthy, and is glad that others should share the enjoyment of it. But as the affection of a sailor for the sea does not blunt him to the pleasures of dry land, so his feeling for the Alps does not make him less susceptible to milder scenes. He does not assert that mountains are the most beautiful objects in creation, but only that they are beautiful. He does not claim for them undivided worship, but a share of admiration.

Little disposed, however, as we may generally be to proselytise, we must feel that there is one class of our fellow-countrymen amongst whom we like to make converts. We too often find blind to mountain beauty those who, as we think, ought to be its priests and interpreters. For the painter, like the poet, can feel 'harmonies of the mountains and the skies' invisible to the general eye; it is his gift by a higher or more developed sense to recognise and reveal to others the beauties of the visible world. By his happy power of fixing on canvas the vision of a moment, he extends the appreciation of nature of all who intelligently look at his work. Paul Potter and Hobbema have taught us the charm which lurks in the flat and at first sight monotonous landscapes of Holland. Looking through their eyes we see the beauty of the moist sun-suffused atmosphere, of the sudden alternations of shadow and gleam which chequer and gild the abundant verdure and peaceful homesteads. Corot and Daubigny lead us better to appreciate the unfamiliar spirit of French river-sides in the dewy morning hours or the red gloaming, a beauty indistinct in form yet vivid in im-

pression as that of a dream. When we exclaim as we rush past in the steamer or express 'What a Cuyp!' or 'How like Corot!' we pay a just tribute to the artist through whose works the essential features of the scene before us have been made so readily recognisable.

In the same way those who have already studied the beautiful Titian (No. 635) in our National Gallery, or the landscape lately exhibited at Burlington House, will find a deeper and subtler pleasure in their first view of the great Belluno valley. But this unfortunately is a rare example. As a rule the Alpine traveller must depend entirely on his own powers of observation and selection or must sharpen his appreciative faculty by the aid of poets.

Douglas Freshfield.

*The Italian Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

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### NORMAN NERUDA

[Mr. Norman Neruda was perhaps the most daring of the group of rock-climbers who conquered the Dolomites in the eighties and nineties. He perished on the Fünffingerspitze on 7th September 1898. For account of his death, see p. 206.]

WHAT friendships can equal those formed in the Alps, knitted together in ever closer ties by the memory of many a glorious expedition where one has learned to know and love one's companions and to prove the truth of their friendship amongst all the hard tests to which it may have been put? Such a friend is no fair-weather friend, not one on whom it is only safe to depend in time of prosperity and safety; his true worth will be proved not so much on the successful expedition in fine weather as amongst the difficulties and may be dangers of bad weather on some hard climb, where all his best qualities will be displayed, and where the knowledge of mutual peril will bring the companions, who together realise that they stand face to face with death, an intimate insight into each other's character and a conviction of each one's unselfish readiness, if necessary, to risk his own life in the attempt to save his comrades, which it is worth even the danger to attempt to save.

**The Alps in  
Friendship**



Such is the stuff of which Alpine friendships are made, and I doubt that any other sport can knit such ties as mountaineering.

A glance round amongst mountaineers of any nation will show many such a friendship, many such a tie that has been forged amongst the snow and rocks of the great peaks, amongst sunshine and storm, success and defeat, every succeeding expedition adding another link to the chain, a chain that not even death can snap asunder, for 'only he is dead who is forgotten,' and the companion of the Alps will never be forgotten by his friends.

Norman Neruda.

*The Climbs of Norman Neruda.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

### A REGRET

[From Leslie Stephen's essay entitled The 'Regrets of a Mountaineer,' recording his feelings on being obliged to give up climbing.]

The Alps in  
Regret

IN time, doubtless, one may get reconciled to anything; one may settle down to be a caterpillar, even after one has known the pleasures of being a butterfly; one may become philosophical, and have one's clothes let out; and even in time, perhaps—though it is almost too terrible to contemplate—be content with a mule or a carriage, or that lowest depth to which human beings can sink, and for which the English language happily affords no name, a *chaise à porteurs*: and even in such degradation the memory of better times may be pleasant: for I doubt much whether it is truth the poet sings—

'That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things!'

Leslie Stephen.

*The Playground of Europe.*

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### SIR MARTIN CONWAY

[Sir Martin Conway is one of the most distinguished of modern climbers, both in mountain and in literary achievement. Fortunately he has escaped all perils to be able still to look forward (1912) to the experience described in this passage.]



WHEN age comes upon him and his limbs grow stiff and his heart enfeebles, the desire to climb may slacken, but the love of mountains will not diminish. Rather will it take on again something of its first freshness. Then it was purely objective; now it becomes subjective once more. The desire to obtain and to possess passes away. We know what it is like to be aloft. We foresee the toil with no less, perhaps with even greater, prevision than we foresee the triumph and delight. We have learnt the secret of the hills and entered into the treasures of the snow. Now we can afford to rest below and gaze aloft. If the mystery of our first views can never return, the glow of multitudinous memories replaces it not unworthily. The peaks have become inaccessible once more. They again belong to another world, the world of the past. The ghosts of our dead friends people them and the ghosts of our dead selves. When the evening glow floods them at close of day it mingles with the mellow glories of the years that are gone. The old passionate hopes and strivings, the old disappointments and regrets, the old rivalries and the old triumphs, vaguely mingling in a vain regret, beget in the retired mountaineer an attitude of peace and aloofness. He feels again the incommunicable and indescribable delight that thrilled him at the first; but now, though it is less passionate, less stimulating, less overwhelming than of yore, it is mellow and not a whit less beautiful and true.

Sir Martin Conway.

*The Alps.*

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## II

## THE ALPS IN DESCRIPTION

SHELLEY

[THIS poem of Shelley's (1792-1822) is especially interesting in comparison with that of Coleridge (p. 1) on the same subject. It was written during a journey in Switzerland with Byron in 1816. Shelley loved mountains and lived much abroad.]

## I

'Mont Blanc'

THE everlasting universe of things  
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,  
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—  
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs  
The source of human thought its tribute brings  
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,  
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume  
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,  
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,  
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river  
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

## II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark deep Ravine—  
Thou many-coloured, many-voicèd vale,  
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail  
Fast cloud shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,  
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down  
From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,  
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame  
Of lightning thro' the tempest ;—thou dost lie,

Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,  
Children of elder time, in whose devotion  
The chainless winds still come and ever came  
To drink their odours, and their mighty singing  
To hear—an old and solemn harmony ;  
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep  
Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil  
Robes some unsculptured image ; the strange sleep  
Which when the voices of the desert fail  
Wraps all in its own deep eternity ;—  
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,  
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame ;  
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,  
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—  
Dizzy Ravine ! and when I gaze upon thee  
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange  
To muse upon my own separate phantasy,  
My own, my human mind, which passively  
Now renders and receives fast influencings,  
Holding an unremitting interchange  
With the clear universe of things around ;  
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings  
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest  
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,  
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,  
Seeking among the shadows that pass by  
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,  
Some phantom, some faint image ; till the breast  
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there !

## III

Some say that gleams of a remoter world  
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,  
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber  
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high ;  
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled  
The veil of life and death ? or do I lie

In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep  
Spread far around and inaccessibly  
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,  
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep  
That vanishes among the viewless gales!  
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,  
Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—  
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms  
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between  
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,  
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread  
And wind among the accumulated steeps;  
A desert peopled by the storms alone,  
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,  
And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously  
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,  
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene  
Where the old Earthquake-dæmon taught her young  
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea  
Of fire, envelope once this silent snow!  
None can reply—all seems eternal now.  
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue  
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,  
So solemn, so serene, that man may be  
But for such faith with nature reconciled;  
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood  
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good  
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

## IV

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,  
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell  
Within the dædal earth; lightning, and rain,  
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,  
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams  
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep

Holds every future leaf and flower ;—the bound  
With which from that detested trance they leap ;  
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,  
And that of him and all that his may be ;  
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound  
Are born and die ; revolve, subside, and swell.  
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity  
Remote, serene, and inaccessible :  
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,  
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains  
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep  
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,  
Slow rolling on ; there, many a precipice,  
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power  
Have piled : dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,  
A city of death, distinct with many a tower  
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.  
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin  
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky  
Rolls its perpetual stream ; vast pines are strewing  
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil  
Branchless and shattered stand ; the rocks, drawn down  
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown  
The limits of the dead and living world,  
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place  
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil ;  
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,  
So much of life and joy is lost. The race  
Of man flies far in dread ; his work and dwelling  
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,  
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves  
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,  
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling  
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,  
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever  
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,  
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

## v

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high :—the power is there,  
 The still and solemn power of many sights,  
 And many sounds, and much of life and death.  
 In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,  
 In the lone glare of day, the snows descend  
 Upon that mountain ; none beholds them there,  
 Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,  
 Or the star-beams dart through them :—

Winds contend

Silently there, and heap the snow with breath  
 Rapid and strong, but silently ! Its home  
 The voiceless lightning in these solitudes  
 Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods  
 Over the snow. The secret strength of things  
 Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome  
 Of heaven is as law, inhabits thee !  
 And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,  
 If to the human's mind's imaginings  
 Silence and solitude were vacancy ?

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1816).

## ROUSSEAU

[Description of a visit to the village of Meillerie on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, by the founder of modern sentimentalism, one of the men who created the spirit of the French Revolution. This passage is from *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Letter xvii., De Saint-Preux à Milord Edouard.]

A SWISS  
 SCENE

WE reached this spot after an hour of walking by wild and tortuous paths, which, rising gently between the trees and the rocks, presented no other difficulty than the length of the walk. As I came near to my old haunts I expected that I would feel some overwhelming grief. But I hid my trouble, and we reached the spot without any display of emotion. This solitary place is a wild and deserted retreat, but full of all that kind of beauty which

is pleasing only to sensitive souls and appears horrible to all others. A torrent, formed by the melting of the snows, roared one hundred and twenty feet from us, bringing down a mass of muddy water, and carrying along with it a tremendous tumult of mud, sand and stones. Behind us a ridge of inaccessible rocks separated the gentle shore where we were walking from that part of the Alps called 'Les glaciers,' because they are covered by enormous caps of ice which have been growing incessantly since the beginning of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Some forests of dark fir trees threw a melancholy shade to our right. There was a great wood of oak to our left above the torrent, and beneath us that immense plain of water which the lake forms in the very bosom of the mountains separated us from the rich shores of the country of the Vaud, with the majestic peak of the Jura crowning the landscape.

In the middle of these superb objects of vision the little plot of ground where we were standing displayed the charms of a small rural resting-place. A few gentle streams trickled across the rocks and covered the grass with a network of the purest crystal water. A few wild fruit trees leaned their branches above our heads. The moist and fresh earth was covered with green plants and bright flowers. Comparing so pleasant a resting-place with the terrific objects that surrounded it, it seemed as if this deserted spot was intended to be the refuge of two lovers escaped alone from the destruction of a world.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau,  
*La Nouvelle Heloise.*  
(Trans. by H. S.)

## SHELLEY

[The Alps are really one. The 'Colli Euganei,' the subject of this poem, are close to Padua, far down on the Italian plain. But they are really tentacles thrown out by the main range. Standing

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau here adds a very interesting footnote. 'These mountains,' he says, 'are so high that for half an hour after sunset their summits are still lit up with the rays of the sun. The red gold of the setting sun gives to these white peaks a glorious rose tint, visible from an immense distance.'

on the Euganean Hills, Shelley could see the snows of the Alps spread

‘High between the clouds and sun.’]

‘Lines written  
amongst the  
Euganean  
Hills’

NOON descends around me now :  
’Tis the noon of autumn’s glow,  
When a soft and purple mist  
Like a vaporous amethyst,  
Or an air-dissolvèd star  
Mingling light and fragrance, far  
From the curved horizon’s bound  
To the point of heaven’s profound,  
Fills the overflowing sky ;  
And the plains that silent lie  
Underneath ; the leaves unsodden  
Where the infant frost has trodden  
With his morning-wingèd feet,  
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;  
And the red and golden vines,  
Piercing with their trellised lines,  
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;  
The dun and bladed grass no less,  
Pointing from this hoary tower  
In the windless air ; the flower  
Glimmering at my feet ! the line  
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine  
In the south dimly islanded ;  
And the Alps, whose snows are spread  
High between the clouds and sun ;  
And of living things each one ;  
And my spirit which so long  
Darkened this swift stream of song,—  
Interpenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky :  
Be it love, light, harmony,  
Odour, or the soul of all  
Which from heaven like dew doth fall



Or the mind which feeds this verse  
 Peopling the lone universe.  
 Noon descends, and after noon  
 Autumn's evening meets me soon,  
 Leading the infantine moon,  
 And that one star, which to her  
 Almost seems to minister  
 Half the crimson light she brings  
 From the sunset's radiant springs :  
 And the soft dreams of the morn  
 (Which like wingèd winds had borne  
 To that silent isle, which lies  
 'Mid remembered agonies,  
 The frail bark of this lone being),  
 Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,  
 And its ancient pilot, Pain,  
 Sits beside the helm again.

Shelley (*October 1818*).

RUSKIN

[This passage is contained in Sir E. T. Cook's Library Edition of Ruskin's Works, vol. xvi.]

**Ruskin's  
 Descriptions**

You see, then, from this spot, the plain of Piedmont, on the north and south, literally as far as the eye can reach ; so that the plain terminates as the sea does, with a level blue line, only tufted with woods instead of waves, and crowded with towers of cities instead of ships. Then in the luminous air beyond and behind this blue horizon line, stand, as it were, the shadows of the mountains, they themselves dark, for the southern slopes of the Alps of the Lago Maggiore and Bellinzona are all without snow ; but the light of the unseen snow-fields, lying level behind the visible peaks, is sent up with strange reflection upon the clouds ; an everlasting light of calm Aurora in the north. Then, higher and higher, around the approaching darkness of the plain, rise the central chains, not as on the Switzer's side, a recognisable group and following of successive and separate hills, but a wilderness of

**(1) The view  
 from Turin  
 from the  
 Villa of  
 Cardinal  
 Maurice**

jagged peaks, cast in passionate and fierce profusion along the circumference of heaven; precipice behind precipice, and gulf beyond gulf, filled with the flaming of the sunset, and forming mighty channels for the flowing of the clouds, which roll up against them out of the vast Italian plain, forced together by the narrowing crescent, and breaking up at last against the Alpine wall in towers of spectral spray; or sweeping up its ravines with long moans of complaining thunder. Out from between the cloudy pillars, as they pass, emerge for ever the great battlements of the memorable and perpetual hills; Viso, with her shepherd witnesses to ancient faith; Rocca-Melone, the highest place of Alpine pilgrimage; Iseran, who shed her burial sheets of snow about the march of Hannibal; Cenis, who shone with her glacier light on the descent of Charlemagne; Paradiso, who watched with her opposite crest the stoop of the French eagle at Marengo; and, underneath all these lying in her soft languor, this tender Italy, lapped in dews of sleep, or more than sleep—one knows not if it is trance, from which morning shall yet roll the blinding mists away, or if the fair shadows of her quietude are indeed the shades of purple death.

John Ruskin.

The Cambridge Inaugural Address, 1858.

(2) The Alps  
from Venice

As the boat drew nearer the city, the coast which the traveller had just left sank behind him into one long, low, sad-coloured line, tufted irregularly with brushwood and willows; but, at what seemed its northern extremity, the hills of Argua rose in a dark cluster of purple pyramids, balanced on the bright mirage of the lagoon; two or three smooth surges of inferior hills extended themselves about their roots, and beyond these, beginning with the craggy peaks above Vincenza, the chain of the Alps girded the whole horizon to the north—a wall of jagged blue, here and there showing through its clefts a wilderness of misty precipices, fading far back into the recesses of Cadore, and itself rising and breaking away eastward, where the sun struck opposite upon its snow, into mighty fragments of peaked light, standing up behind the barred clouds of evening, one after another, countless, the crown of the Adrian Sea, until the eye turned back from pursuing

them, to rest upon the nearer burning of the campaniles of Murano, and on the great city, where it magnified itself along the waves, as the quick, silent pacing of the gondola drew nearer and nearer.

John Ruskin.  
*The Stones of Venice.*

SOMETIMES when walking at evening on the Lido, whence the great chain of the Alps, crested with silver clouds, might be seen rising above the front of the Ducal Palace, I used to feel as much awe in gazing on the building as on the hills, and could believe that God had done a greater work in breathing into the narrowness of dust the mighty spirits by whom its haughty walls had been raised, and its burning legends written, than in lifting the rocks of granite higher than the clouds of heaven, and veiling them with their various mantle of purple flower and shadowy pine. (3) Another impression

John Ruskin.  
*The Stones of Venice.*

## MONT BLANC—SUNRISE AND SUNSET

[One of the most remarkable climbers of the last century was, undoubtedly, the scientist, John Tyndall (1825-1893), who first became acquainted with the mountains during his researches into the movements of glaciers and the laws that governed those movements. The spirit of inquiry combined with the spirit of adventure to make him a passionate lover of the Alps. He was the first to climb the Weisshorn, and ran Mr. Whymper very close in the race for the summit of the Matterhorn. In his later years, Professor Tyndall built himself a house on the Bel Alp, and lived much in Switzerland. This passage is from Tyndall's description of his second ascent of Mont Blanc (1858), in the *Glaciers of the Alps*.]

AND now the sky began to brighten towards dawn, with that deep and calm beauty which suggests the thought of adoration to the human mind. Helped by the contemplation of the brightening east, which seemed to lend lightness to our muscles, we cheerily breasted the steep slope up to the Grand Plateau. The snow here was deep, and each of our porters took the lead in turn. We paused upon the Grand Plateau and had breakfast; digging while (1) Sunrise

we halted our feet deeply in snow. Thence up to the corridor, by a totally different route from that pursued by Mr. Hirst and myself the year previously; the slope was steep, but it had not a precipice for its boundary. Deep steps were necessary for a time, but when we reached the summit our ascent became more gentle. The eastern sky continued to brighten, and by its illumination the Grand Plateau, and its bounding heights were lovely beyond conception. The snow was of the purest white, and the glacier, as it pushed itself on all sides into the basin, was riven by fissures filled with a cerulean light, which deepened to inky gloom as the vision descended into them. The edges were overhung with fretted cornices, from which depended long clear icicles, tapering from their abutments like spears of crystal. The distant fissures, across which the vision ranged obliquely without descending into them, emitted that magical firmamental shimmer, which, contrasted with the pure white of the snow, was inexpressibly lovely. Near to us also grand castles of ice reared themselves, some erect, some overturned, with clear-cut sides, striped by the courses of the annual snows, while high above the *séracs* of the plateau rose their still grander brothers of the Dôme du Goûter. There was a nobility in this glacier scene which I think I have never seen surpassed—a strength of nature, and yet a tenderness, which at once raised and purified the soul. The gush of the direct sunlight could add nothing to this heavenly beauty; indeed I thought its yellow beams a profanation, as they crept down from the humps of the Dromedary, and invaded more and more the solemn purity of the realm below.

Tyndall.

*Glaciers of the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

[Leslie Stephen's impressions of 6th August 1873.]

(2) *Sunset*

SUCH a view produces the powerful but shadowy impression which one expects from an opium dream. The vast perspective drags itself out to an horizon so distant as to blend imperceptibly with the lower sky. It has a vague suggestion of rhythmical motion, strangely combined with eternal calm. Drop a pebble into a perfectly still sheet of water; imagine that each ripple is

supplanted by a lofty mountain range, of which all detail is lost in purple haze, and that the furthest undulations melt into the mysterious infinite. One gazes with a sense of soothing melancholy as one listens to plaintive modulations of some air of linked 'sweetness long drawn out.' Far away among the hills we could see long reaches of the peaceful Lake of Geneva, just gleaming through the varying purple; but at our backs the icy crest of the great mountain still rose proudly above us, to remind us that our task was not yet finished. Fortunately for us, scarcely a cloud was to be seen under the enormous concave of the dark blue heavens; a few light streamers of cirrus were moving gently over our heads in those remote abysses from which they never condescend even to the loftiest Alpine summits. Faint and evanescent as they might be, they possibly had an ominous reading for the future, but the present was our own; the little puffs of wind that whispered round some lofty edges were keen enough in quality to remind us of possible frost-bites, but they had scarcely force enough to extinguish a lucifer match.

Peak by peak the high snowfields caught the rosy glow and shone like signal-fires across the dim breadths of delicate twilight. Like Xerxes, we looked over the countless host sinking to rest, but with the rather different reflection, that a hundred years hence they would probably be doing much the same thing, whilst we should long have ceased to take any interest in the performance. And suddenly began a more startling phenomenon. A vast cone, with its apex pointing away from us, seemed to be suddenly cut out from the world beneath; night was within its borders, and the twilight still all round; the blue mists were quenched where it fell, and for the instant we could scarcely tell what was the origin of this strange appearance. Some unexpected change seemed to have taken place in the programme; as though a great fold in the curtain had suddenly given way, and dropped on to part of the scenery. Of course a moment's reflection explained the meaning of this uncanny intruder; it was the giant shadow of Mont Blanc, testifying to his supremacy over all meaner eminences. It is difficult to say how sharply marked was the outline, and how

startling was the contrast between this pyramid of darkness and the faintly lighted spaces beyond its influence; a huge inky blot seemed to have suddenly fallen on the landscape. As we gazed we could see it move. It swallowed up ridge by ridge, and its sharp point crept steadily from one landmark to another down the broad Valley of Aosta. We were standing, in fact, on the point of the gnomon of a gigantic sundial, the face of which was formed by thousands of square miles of mountain and valley.

Leslie Stephen.

*The Playground of Europe.*

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### TENNYSON

**Tennyson and the Alps** [Tennyson (1809-1892), the most illustrious of the Victorian poets, travelled less abroad and wrote less of Europe and more of England than almost any other English poet since Shakespeare. But wherever he travelled he carried an observing eye. I give as an instance his description of the scenery of the Bernese Oberland in the 'Princess,' and his vignette of a mountain scene in the 'Palace of Art.' The famous description in the 'Daisy' of the view from Milan Cathedral was a reminiscence of his wedding journey in 1852.]

#### **The Heights and the Valleys**

COME down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:  
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)  
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?  
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease  
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the silver horns  
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls

To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :  
 But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down  
 To find him in the valley ; let the wild  
 Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave  
 The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
 Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke  
 That like a broken purpose waste in air :  
 So waste not thou ; but come ; for all the vales  
 Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth  
 Arise to thee ; the children call, and I  
 Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,  
 Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet ;  
 Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,  
 The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
 And murmuring of innumerable bees.

*The Princess.*

O MILAN, O the chanting quires,  
 The giant windows' blazon'd fires,  
     The height, the space, the gloom, the glory !  
 A mount of marble, a hundred spires !

Monte  
Rosa from  
Milan

I climb'd the roofs at break of day ;  
 Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.  
     I stood among the silent statues,  
 And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,  
 Was Monte Rosa, hanging there  
     A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys  
 And snowy dells in a golden air.

*The Daisy.*

AND one a foreground black with stones and slags,  
 Beyond, a line of heights, and higher  
 All barr'd with long white cloud the scornful crags,  
 And highest, snow and fire.

A Mountain  
Picture

*The Palace of Art.*

**Mountain  
Sounds**

THE moanings of the homeless sea,  
 The sound of streams that swift or slow  
 Draw down Æonian hills, and sow  
 The dusts of continents to be.

*In Memoriam.*

[I add here two of Tennyson's impressions of the Pyrenees. The first is a reminiscence of a holiday tour with Hallam in 1832.]

**'In the Valley  
of Caunteretz'**

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest white,  
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,  
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,  
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.  
 All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,  
 The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away ;  
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,  
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,  
 And all along the valley, by rock, and cave, and tree,  
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

[This famous description in the 'Ænone' was also suggested by a visit to the Pyrenees.]

**A Vale in Ida**

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier  
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.  
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,  
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,  
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand  
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down  
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars  
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine  
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.  
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus  
 Stands up and takes the morning : but in front  
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal  
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,  
 The crown of Troas.

*Ænone.*



## GEORGE MEREDITH

[One of the brilliant descriptions of the Alps in the novels of George Meredith. For other passages, see pp. 277-281.]

FROM Monte Motterone you survey the Lombard Plain. It is a towering dome of green among a hundred pinnacles of grey and rust-red crags. At dawn the summit of the mountain has an eagle eye for the far Venetian boundary and the barrier of the Apennines; but with sunrise come the mists. The vast brown level is seen narrowing in; the Ticino and the Sesia waters, nearest, quiver on the air like sleepy lakes: the plain is engulfed up to the high ridges of the distant Southern mountain range, which lie stretched to a faint cloud-like line, in shape like a solitary monster of old seas crossing the Deluge. Long arms of vapour stretch across the urn-like valleys, and gradually thickening and swelling upward, enwrap the scored bodies of the ashen-faced peaks and the pastures of the green mountain, till the heights become islands over a forgotten earth. Bells of herds down the hidden run of the sweet grasses, and a continuous leaping of its rivulets, give the Motterone a voice of youth and homeliness amid that stern company of Titan-heads, for whom the hawk and the vulture cry. The storm has beaten at them until they have got the aspect of the storm. They take colour from sunlight, and are joyless in colour as in shade. When the lower world is under pushing steam, they wear the look of the revolted sons of Time, fast chained before scornful heaven in an iron peace. Day at last brings vigorous fire; arrows of light pierce the mist-wreaths, the dancing draperies, the floors of vapour; and the mountain of piled pasturages is seen with its foot on the shore of Lago Maggiore. Down an extreme gulf the full sunlight, as if darting on a jewel in the deeps, seizes the blue-green lake with its isles. The villages along the darkly-wooded borders of the lake show white as clustered swans; here and there a tented boat is visible, shooting from terraces of vines, or hanging on its shadow. Monte Boscero is unveiled; the semi-circle of the Piedmontese and the Swiss peaks, covering Lake Orta, behind, on along the Ticinese and the Grisons, leftward toward

The View  
from  
Motterone

and beyond the Lugano hills, stand bare in black and grey and rust-red and purple. You behold a burnished realm of mountain and plain beneath the royal sun of Italy. In the foreground it shines hard as the lines of an irradiated Cellini shield. Farther away, over middle ranges that are soft and clear, it melts, confusing the waters with hot rays, and the forests with darkness, to where, wavering in and out of view like flying wings, and shadowed like wings of archangels with rose and with orange and with violet, silver-white Alps are seen. You might take them for mystical streaming torches on the border-ground between vision and fancy. They lean as in a great flight forward upon Lombardy.

George Meredith.

*Vittoria.*

Constable and Co., Ltd.

## THE VALLEYS AND THE HEIGHTS

**Alpine  
Contrasts  
(1) The Valley  
World**

BUT it is not, after all, as being rich in science, nor simply as being lovely in scenery, that the Alps are chiefly marked. It is more that they form as it were an epitome of the earth, and place before us in the range of a summer day's walk every form of natural object and production in the most striking and immediate contrast. Within a few hours after leaving the most terrible forms of ruin, desolation and solitude, where no life is found, and man can remain but for a few hours, the traveller is in the midst of all the luxuriant loveliness of Italian valleys and lakes, basking in an almost tropical heat, surrounded by the most delicate flowers, ferns, and shrubs, and charmed into mere rest by ever-varied landscapes, softer and more fairy-like than ever Turner drew. Indeed, after some weeks of rough work amidst the glaciers, it is impossible to resist the emotion of grateful delight with which one recognises the overflowing richness of this earth, amidst the sights, the sounds, the perfumes, and the myriad sensations of pleasure with which life on the Italian lakes is full. No one can taste these wholly who has not borne the heat and burden of the day, the toil and cold of the Alpine regions. Then only is one able to see the glory and profusion of Nature as a whole, and to conceive in one act of

thought, and feel but as one manifold sensation, all that she has most strange and beautiful, from the Arctic zone to the Tropics.

In the upper snow-world (if less beautiful), there is a mystery and a force which has an over-powering effect upon human nature. It does what Aristotle tells us it is the function of tragedy to do, to purify the soul by sympathy and terror. The strangeness and vastness of everything strike one like a natural portent, as a whirlwind or an earthquake might rouse us, and shake off from us everything but the first simple facts of human life. The absolute stillness and absence of all life, animal or vegetable, the sense of solitude lasting all day, and day after day, the sense of the infinite which trampling on continual snow produces, the dazzling effect of perpetual snowfields, the need of constant effort to keep up animal life, the weird extravagance and the vast scale of the ice-shapes, the unnatural freshness of the air, and, above all, the sense of being out of and above the earth, and of looking down over many kingdoms and tracts that make segments in the map of Europe—these things completely lift a man out of ordinary life, and affect him as does solitude in an Eastern desert, in the midst of the Atlantic, on the prairie, or in Arctic latitudes.

Frederic Harrison.  
*My Alpine Jubilee.*  
 Smith, Elder and Co.

## ROBERT BROWNING

[Robert Browning (1812-1889), the second only to Tennyson among the Victorian poets, lived a great deal abroad after his marriage with Miss Elizabeth Barrett (1846) on account of her health; in Italy till 1851, then in Paris, and finally in Florence and Rome until Mrs. Browning's death in 1861. In later life he passed several summers in the Western Alps.

Hence his impressions of the Alps were received mostly from the Italian slopes, the neighbourhood of Castello Franco, Asolo, and such places. 'By the Fireside' gives a very true and charming description of a walk over the Col di Colma, the little pass between Lago d'Orta and Varallo.]

**Sub-Alpine  
Pass**

Look at the ruined chapel again  
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge !  
Is that a tower, I point you plain,  
Or is it a mill, or an iron forge,  
Breaks solitude in vain ?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;  
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;  
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,  
The thread of water single and slim,  
Through the ravage some torrent brings !

Does it feed the little lake below ?  
That speck of white just on its marge  
Is Pella ; see, in the evening glow,  
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge  
When Alp meets heaven in snow !

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;  
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it  
By boulder-stones where lichens mock  
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit  
Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,  
And the thorny balls, each three in one,  
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,  
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,  
These early November hours—

That crimson the creeper's leaf across  
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,  
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,  
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped  
Elf-needed mat of moss,

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged  
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew  
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,  
Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew  
Of toadstools peep indulged.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge  
That takes the turn to a range beyond,  
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge,  
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond  
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,  
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;  
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.  
See here again, how the lichens fret  
And the roots of the ivy strike!

Poor little place, where its one priest comes  
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,  
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,  
Gathered within that precinct small  
By the dozen ways one roams—

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,  
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,  
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,  
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread  
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,  
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise  
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:  
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,  
But has borne the weather's brunt—

Not from the fault of the builder, though,  
 For a pent-house properly projects  
 Where three carved beams make a certain show,  
 Dating—good thought of our architect's—  
 'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

And all day long a bird sings there,  
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;  
 The place is silent and aware;  
 It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,  
 But that is its own affair.

Robert Browning.  
*By the Fireside.*

### THE SWISS CHALET

The Swiss  
 Chalet:  
 Its Prose  
 and Poetry

THE life of a Swiss peasant is divided into two periods: that in which he is watching his cattle at their summer pasture on the high Alps, and that in which he seeks shelter from the violence of the winter storms in the most retired parts of the low valleys. During the first period, he requires only occasional shelter from storms of excessive violence; during the latter, a sufficient protection from continued inclement weather. The Alpine or summer cottage, therefore, is a rude log hut, formed of unsquared pine trunks, notched into each other at the corners. The roof being excessively flat, so as to offer no surface to the wind, is covered with fragments of any stone that will split easily, held on by crossing logs; which are, in their turn, kept down by masses of stone; the whole being generally sheltered behind some protecting rock, or resting against the slope of the mountain, so that, from one side, you may step upon the roof. That is the *chalet*. When well grouped, running along a slope of mountain side, these huts produce a very pleasing effect, being never obtrusive (owing to the prevailing greyness of their tone), uniting well with surrounding objects, and bestowing at once animation and character.

But the winter residence, the Swiss cottage, properly so called, is a more elaborate piece of workmanship. The principal

requisite is, of course, strength; and this is always observable in the large size of the timbers, and the ingenious manner in which they are joined, so as to support and relieve each other, when any of them are severely tried. The roof is always very flat, generally meeting at an angle of  $155^{\circ}$ , and projecting from five feet to seven feet over the cottage side, in order to prevent the windows from being thoroughly clogged up with snow. That this projection may not be crushed down by the enormous weight of snow which it must sometimes sustain, it is assisted by strong wooden supports which sometimes extend half down the walls for the sake of strength, divide the side into regular compartments, and are rendered ornamental by grotesque carving. Every Canton has its own window. That of Uri, with its diamond woodwork at the bottom, is, perhaps, one of the richest. The galleries are generally rendered ornamental by a great deal of labour bestowed upon their wood-work. This is best executed in the Canton of Berne. This door is always six or seven feet from the ground, and occasionally much more, that it may be accessible in snow; and is reached by an oblique gallery, leading up to a horizontal one. The base of the cottage is formed of stone, generally white-washed. The chimneys must have a chapter to themselves; they are splendid examples of utility combined with ornament.

Such are the chief characteristics of the Swiss cottage, separately considered. I must now take notice of its effect in scenery.

When one has been wandering for a whole morning through a valley of perfect silence, where everything around, which is motionless, is colossal, and everything which has motion, resistance; where the strength and glory of nature are principally developed in the very forces which feed upon her majesty; and where, in the midst of mightiness which seems imperishable, all that is indeed eternal is the influence of desolation; one is apt to be surprised, and by no means agreeably, to find, crouched behind some projecting rock, a piece of architecture which is neat in the extreme, though in the midst of wildness, weak in the midst of strength, contemptible in the midst of immensity. There is something offensive in its neatness. For the wood is almost always perfectly clean, and looks as if it had just been cut; it

is consequently raw in its colour, and destitute of all variety of tone. This is especially disagreeable when the eye has been previously accustomed to, and finds, everywhere around, the exquisite mingling of colour, and confused, though perpetually graceful forms, by which the details of mountain scenery are peculiarly distinguished. Every fragment of rock is finished in its effect, tinted with thousands of pale lichens, and fresh mosses; every pine trunk is warm with the life of various vegetation; every grassy bank glowing with mellowed colour and delicate leafage. How, then, can the contrast be otherwise than painful, between this perfect loveliness and the dead, raw, lifeless surface of the deal boards of the cottage? Its weakness is pitiable; for, though there is always evidence of considerable strength on close examination, there is no *effect* of strength: the real thickness of the logs is concealed by the cutting and carving of their exposed surfaces; and even what is seen is felt to be so utterly contemptible, when opposed to the destructive forces which are in operation around, that the feelings are irritated at the imagined audacity of the inanimate object, with the self-conceit of its impotence; and finally, the eye is offended at its want of size. It does not, as might be at first supposed, enhance the sublimity of surrounding scenery by its littleness, for it provokes no comparison, and there must be proportion between objects, or they cannot be compared. If the Parthenon, or the Pyramid of Cheops, or St. Peter's were placed in the same situation, the mind would first form a just estimate of the magnificence of the building, and then be trebly impressed with the size of the masses which overwhelmed it. The architecture would not lose, and the crags would gain, by the juxtaposition; but the cottage, which must be felt to be a thing which the weakest stream of the Alps could toss down before it like a foam-globe, is offensively contemptible: it is like a child's toy let fall accidentally on the hill-side; it does not unite with the scene; it is not content to sink into a quiet corner, and personify humility and peace; but it draws attention upon itself by its pretension to decoration, while its decorations themselves cannot bear examination, because they are useless, unmeaning and incongruous.



So much for its faults; and I have had no mercy upon them, the rather, because I am always afraid of being biassed in its favour by my excessive love for its sweet nationality. Now for its beauties. Wherever it is found, it always suggests ideas of a gentle, pure, and pastoral life. One feels that the peasants whose hands carved the planks so neatly, and adorned their cottage so industriously, and still preserve it so perfectly, and so neatly, can be no dull, drunken, lazy boors; one feels, also, that it requires both firm resolution, and determined industry, to maintain so successful a struggle against 'the crash of thunder and the warring winds.' Sweet ideas float over the imagination of such passages of peasant life as the gentle Walton so loved; of the full milk-pail and the mantling cream-bowl; of the evening dance and the matin song; of the herdsmen on the Alps, of the maidens by the fountain; of all that is peculiarly and indisputably Swiss. For the cottage is beautifully national; there is nothing to be found the least like it in any other country. The moment a glimpse is caught of its projecting galleries, one knows that it is the land of Tell and Winkelried; and the traveller feels, that, were he indeed Swiss-born and Alp-bred, a bit of that carved plank, meeting his eye in a foreign land, would be as effectual as a note of the *Ranz des Vaches* upon the ear.

Again, when a number of these cottages are grouped together, they break upon each other's formality, and form a mass of fantastic projection, of carved window and over-hanging roof, full of character, and picturesque in the extreme. An excellent example of this is the Bernese village of Unterseen. Again when the ornament is not very elaborate, yet enough to preserve the character, and the cottage is old, and not very well kept (suppose in a Catholic Canton), and a little rotten, the effect is beautiful; the timber becomes weather-stained and of a fine brown, harmonising delightfully with the grey stones on the roof, and the dark green of surrounding pines. If it be fortunate enough to be situated in some quiet glen, out of sight of the gigantic features of the scene, and surrounded with cliffs to which it bears some proportion; and if it be partially concealed, not intruding on the eye, but well united with everything around,

it becomes altogether perfect ; humble, beautiful, and interesting. Perhaps no cottage can then be found to equal it ; and none can be more finished in effect, graceful in detail, and characteristic as a whole.

Ruskin.

*The Poetry of Architecture.*

### AMIEL

[From the diary of that wonderful Swiss philosopher and thinker, Henri Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881). He achieved little in life, but left behind him a Journal which will live. This is from Mrs. Humphry Ward's translation.]

Autumn in  
the Alps

*Ten o'clock in the morning.*

A MARVELLOUS view of blinding and bewildering beauty. Above a milky sea of cloud, flooded with morning light, the rolling waves of which are beating up against the base of the wooded steepes of the Weissenstein, the vast circle of the Alps soars to a sublime height. The eastern side of the horizon is drowned in the splendours of the rising mists ; but from the Tödi westward, the whole chain floats pure and clear between the milky plain and the pale blue sky. The giant assembly is sitting in council above the valleys and the lakes still submerged in vapour.—The Clariden, the Spannörter, the Titlis, then the Bernese *colossi* from the Wetterhorn to the Diablerets, then the peaks of Vaud, Valais, and Fribourg, and beyond these high chains the two kings of the Alps, Mont Blanc, of a pale pink, and the bluish point of Monte Rosa, peering out through a cleft in the Doldenhorn :—such is the composition of the great snowy amphitheatre. The outline of the horizon takes all possible forms ; needles, ridges, battlements, pyramids, obelisks, teeth, fangs, pincers, horns, cupolas ; the mountain profile sinks, rises again, twists and sharpens itself in a thousand ways, but always so as to maintain an angular and serrated line. Only the inferior and secondary groups of mountains show any large curves or sweeping undulations of form. The Alps are more than an upheaval ; they are a tearing and gashing of the earth's surface. Their granite peaks bite into the sky instead of caressing it. The Jura, on the contrary, spreads its broad back complacently under the blue dome of air.

. . . . .

6th April 1869.      The Alps in  
Spring

MAGNIFICENT weather. The Alps are dazzling under their silver haze. Sensations of all kinds have been crowding upon me: the delights of a walk under the rising sun, the charms of a wonderful view, longing for travel, and thirst for joy, hunger for work, for emotion, for life, dreams of happiness and of love. A passionate wish to live, to feel, to express, stirred the depths of my heart. It was a sudden re-awakening of youth, a flash of poetry, a renewing of the soul, a fresh growth of the wings of desire. I was overpowered by a host of conquering, vagabond, adventurous aspirations. I forgot my age, my obligations, my duties, my vexations, and youth leapt within me as though life was beginning again. It was as though something explosive had caught fire, and one's soul were scattered to the four winds; in such a mood one would fain devour the whole world, experience everything, see everything, Faust's ambition enters into one, universal desire—a horror of one's own prison cell. One throws off one's hair-shirt, and one would fain gather the whole of nature into one's arms and heart. O ye passions, a ray of sunshine is enough to rekindle you all. The cold black mountain is a volcano once more, and melts its snowy crown with one single gust of flaming breath. It is the spring which brings about these sudden and improbable resurrections, the spring which, sending a thrill and tumult of life through all that lives, is the parent of impetuous desires, of overpowering inclinations, of unforeseen and inextinguishable outbursts of passion. It breaks through the rigid bark of the trees, and rends the mask on the face of asceticism; it makes the monk tremble in the shadow of his convent, the maiden behind the curtains of her room, the child sitting on his school bench, the old man bowed under his rheumatism.

*Amiel's Journal.*

By kind permission of Messrs. Macmillan and Co.

#### MATTHEW ARNOLD

[Both poet and critic, Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), son of the famous Dr. Arnold, was perhaps greatest as a poet. In the first of these poems he makes Switzerland the scene of the only love-episode in his poetry.]

## 'Meeting'

AGAIN I see my bliss at hand,  
 The town, the lake are here ;  
 My Marguerite smiles upon the strand,  
 Unalter'd with the year.

I know that graceful figure fair,  
 That cheek of languid hue ;  
 I know that soft, enkerchief'd hair,  
 And those sweet eyes of blue.

Again I spring to make my choice ;  
 Again in tones of ire  
 I hear a God's tremendous voice :  
 'Be counsell'd, and retire.'

Ye guiding Powers who join and part,  
 What would ye have with me ?  
 Ah, warn some more ambitious heart,  
 And let the peaceful be !

## 'Parting'

YE storm-winds of Autumn !  
 Who rush by, who shake  
 The window, and ruffle  
 The gleam-lighted lake ;  
 Who cross to the hill-side  
 Thin-sprinkled with farms,  
 Where the high woods strip sadly  
 Their yellowing arms—  
 Ye are bound for the mountains !  
 Ah ! with you let me go  
 Where your cold, distant barrier,  
 The vast range of snow,  
 Through the loose cloud lifts dimly  
 Its white peaks in air—  
 How deep is their stillness !  
 Ah, would I were there !

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,  
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?  
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn  
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?  
Or was it from some sun-fleck'd mountain-brook  
That the sweet voice its upland clearness took?

Ah! it comes nearer—  
Sweet notes, this way!

Hark! fast by the window  
The rushing winds go,  
To the ice-cumber'd gorges,  
The vast seas of snow!  
There the torrents drive upward  
Their rock-strangled hum;  
There the avalanche thunders  
The hoarse torrent dumb.  
—I come, O ye mountains!  
Ye torrents, I come!

But who is this by the half-open'd door,  
Whose figure casts a shadow on the floor?  
The sweet blue eyes—the soft ash-colour'd hair—  
The cheeks that still their gentle paleness wear—  
The lovely lips, with their arch smile that tells  
The unconquer'd joy in which her spirit dwells—  
Ah! they bend nearer—  
Sweet lips, this way!

Hark! the wind rushes past us!  
Ah! with that let me go  
To the clear, waning hill-side,  
Unspotted by snow,  
There to watch, o'er the sunk vale,  
The frore-mountain-wall,  
Where the niched snow-bed sprays down  
Its powdery fall.

There its dusky blue clusters  
 The aconite spreads ;  
 There the pines slope, the cloud-strips  
 Hung soft in their heads.  
 No life but, at moments,  
 The mountain bee's hum.  
 —I come, O ye mountains !  
 Ye pine-woods, I come !

Forgive me ! forgive me !  
 Ah, Marguerite, fain  
 Would these arms reach to clasp thee !  
 But see ! 'tis in vain.

In the void air, towards thee,  
 My stretch'd arms are cast ;  
 But a sea rolls between us—  
 Our different past !

To the lips, ah ! of others  
 Those lips have been prest,  
 And others, 'ere I was,  
 Were strained to that breast ;

Far, far from each other  
 Our spirits have grown ;  
 And what heart knows another ?  
 Ah ! who knows his own ?

Blow, ye winds ! lift me with you !  
 I come to the wild.  
 Fold closely, O Nature !  
 Thine arms round thy child.

To thee only God granted  
 A heart ever new—  
 To all always open,  
 To all always true.

Ah! calm me, restore me ;  
And dry up my tears  
On the high mountain-platforms,  
Where morn first appears.

Where the white mists, for ever,  
Are spread and upfurl'd—  
In the stir of the forces  
Whence issued the world.

Matthew Arnold.  
*Switzerland.*

[Composed ten years after the preceding.]

TEN years!—and to my waking eye  
Once more the roofs of Berne appear ;  
The rocky banks, the terrace high,  
The stream!—and do I linger here?

'The Terrace  
at Berne'

The clouds are on the Oberland,  
The Jungfrau snows look faint and far ;  
But bright are those green fields at hand,  
And through those fields comes down the Aar,

And from the blue twin-lakes it comes,  
Flows by the town, the church-yard fair ;  
And 'neath the garden walk it hums,  
The house!—and is my Marguerite there?

Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush  
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,  
Quick through the oleanders brush,  
And clasp thy hands, and cry '*Tis thou!*'

Or hast thou long since wander'd back,  
Daughter of France! to France, thy home  
And flitted down the flowery track  
Where feet like thine too lightly come?

Doth riotous laughter now replace  
Thy smile ; and rouge, with stony glare,  
Thy cheek's soft hue ; and fluttering lace  
The kerchief that enwound thy hair ?

Or is it over ?—art thou dead ?—  
Dead !—and no warning shiver ran  
Across my heart, to say thy thread  
Of life was cut, and closed thy span !

Could from earth's ways that figure slight  
Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so ?  
Of that fresh voice the gay delight  
Fail from earth's air, and I not know ?

Or shall I find thee still, but changed,  
But not the Marguerite of thy prime ?  
With all thy being re-arranged,  
Pass'd through the crucible of time.

With spirit vanish'd, beauty waned,  
And hardly yet a glance, a tone,  
A gesture—anything—retain'd  
Of all that was my Marguerite's own ?

I will not know ! For wherefore try,  
To things by mortal course that live,  
A shadowy durability,  
For which they were not meant, to give ?

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass  
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,  
So on the sea of life, alas !  
Man meets man—meets, and quits again.

I knew it when my life was young ;  
I feel it still, now youth is o'er,  
—The mists are on the mountain hung,  
And Marguerite I shall see no more.

Matthew Arnold.  
*Switzerland.*



—THE vision ended. I awoke  
 As out of sleep, and no  
 Voice moved ;—only the torrent broke  
 The silence, far below.

'I saw the  
 Morning  
 break'

Soft darkness on the turf did lie.  
 Solemn, o'er hut and wood,  
 In the yet star-sown nightly sky,  
 The peak of Jaman stood.

Still in my soul the voice I heard  
 Of Obermann !—away  
 I turned ; by some vague impulse stirr'd,  
 Along the rocks of Naye

Past Sonchaud's piny flanks I gaze  
 And the blanch'd summit bare  
 Of Malatrait, to where in haze  
 The Valais opens fair,

And the doomed Velan, with his snows,  
 Behind the upcrowding hills,  
 Doth all the heavenly opening close  
 Which the Rhone's murmur fills :—

And glorious there, without a sound,  
 Across the glimmering lake,  
 High in the Valais-depth profound,  
 I saw the morning break.

Matthew Arnold.  
*Obermann Once More.*

## THE MATTERHORN—ASPECTS

THE Matterhorn has no real top ; it may have had one in past ages, but it must be in ruins below, and undoubtedly it fell on the Italian side, leaving on the brow of the mountain that sharp outline which is typical of its shape. The huts which appear below, tiny dots in the green basin of Breuil, are perhaps built with pieces

(1) From the  
 Summit

of the ancient top of the Matterhorn. Any one looking up from the Theodul glacier, whence the summit looks like the peak of a friar's hood, would never think that the mountain ends in a long ridge, on which half a company of an Alpine regiment could sit almost in comfort in a row. The eastern extremity of the ridge forms the Swiss summit, the western the Italian. We crossed from one to the other, from the Cervin to the Matterhorn. The Matterhorn was deserted also; a party from Zermatt had already commenced the descent, and I could see their track in the snow on the upper part of the slope. The crows had been left in possession of the summit for the rest of the day, for it is very rarely that any one reaches the top after the early hours of the morning.

The crows of the Matterhorn are strange, large birds with jet-black shiny feathers, with long bills and with beautiful blood-red claws. They are a strange tribe, who live up in the heights in the summer, concealed in unexplored recesses on the inaccessible precipices of the Zmutt and Furggen faces. They are well disposed towards the few men who climb the mountain; they know they are harmless folk, and much too busy with other matters to wish to go after them. When the weather is fine, they watch from above parties of climbers as they make the toilsome ascent; they fly down to meet them and circle about them, as dolphins in the sea swim about in the wake of the ship, expectant of its refuse. If the weather be threatening, they utter their sad, unpleasing cry, as if to tell men of the coming tempest. They restlessly come and go, and beat up against the wind with their strong wings, sometimes hovering almost motionless in the air; then they dash headlong into the mist with folded wings, dropping down like stones, to flee the storm.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

[The following is from Tyndall's account of the third assault on the Matterhorn.]

(2) From the  
Ridge

STANDING on the arête, at the foot of a remarkable cliff-gable seen from Zermatt, and permitting the vision to range over the

Matterhorn, its appearance is exceedingly wild and impressive. Hardly two things can be more different than the two aspects of the mountain from above and below. Seen from the Riffel or Zermatt, it presents itself as a compact pyramid, smooth and steep, and defiant of the weathering air. From above, it seems torn to pieces by the frosts of ages, while its vast facettes are so foreshortened as to stretch out into the distance like plains. But this underestimate of the steepness of the mountain is checked by the deportment of its stones. Their discharge along the side of the pyramid to-day was incessant, and at any moment, by detaching a single boulder, we could let loose a cataract of them, which flew with wild rapidity and with a thunderous clatter down the mountain. We once wandered too far from the arête, and were warned back to it by a train of these missiles sweeping past us.

As long as our planet yields less heat to space than she receives from the bodies of space, so long will the forms upon her surface undergo mutation, and as soon as equilibrium, in regard to heat, has been established, we shall have, as Thomson has pointed out, not peace, but death. Life is the product and accompaniment of change, and the selfsame power that tears the flanks of the hills to pieces is the mainspring of the animal and vegetable worlds. Still, there is something chilling in the contemplation of the irresistible and remorseless character of those infinitesimal forces, whose integration through the ages pulls down even the Matterhorn. Hacked and hurt by time, the aspect of the mountain from its higher crags saddened me. Hitherto the impression that it made was that of savage strength, but here we had inexorable decay.

This motion of decay, however, implied a reference to a period when the Matterhorn was in the full strength of mountainhood. My thoughts naturally ran back to its possible growth and origin. Nor did they halt there, but wandered on through molten worlds to that nebulous haze which philosophers have regarded, and with good reason, as the proximate source of all material things. I tried to look at this universal cloud, containing within itself the prediction of all that has since occurred; I tried to imagine it as the seat of those forces whose action was to issue in solar and stellar systems, and all that they involve. Did that formless fog contain

potentially the *sadness* with which I regarded the Matterhorn? Did the *thought* which now ran back to it simply return to its primeval home? If so, had we not better recast our definitions of matter and force? For if life and thought be the very flower of both, any definition which omits life and thought must be inadequate if not untrue.

Questions like these, useless as they seem, may still have a practical outcome. For if the final goal of man has not yet been attained, if his development has not yet been arrested, who can say that such yearnings and questionings are not necessary to the opening of a finer vision, to the budding and the growth of diviner powers? Without this upward force could man have risen to his present height? When I look at the heavens and the earth, at my own body, at my strength and weakness of mind, even at these ponderings, and ask myself, Is there no being or thing in the universe that knows more about these matters than I do?—what is my answer? Supposing our theologic schemes of creation, condemnation, and redemption to be dissipated, and the warmth of denial which they excite, and which as a motive force, can match the warmth of affirmation, dissipated at the same time; would the undeflected human mind return to the meridian of absolute neutrality as regards these ultra-physical questions? Is such a position one of stable equilibrium? Such are the questions, without replies, which could run through consciousness during a ten minutes' halt upon the weathered spire of the Matterhorn.

Tyndall.

*Hours of Exercise on the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

3) From the  
Slopes

WHEN it became quite dark, one of us suggested stopping and waiting for the moon to rise and light us on our way. We sat down where we were and ate some food, but without appetite; throughout the day we had felt neither hunger nor thirst; then, in our impatience, we rose again, and started once more without waiting for the moonlight.

We saw down in the Swiss valley a number of lights shining in long, regular rows; they were the lights of Zermatt, the Alpine capital, but so far off that they seemed like the reflections of the

stars of heaven in a deep, dark lake. That glimpse of civilisation and the haunts of men, seen from the desolate mountain side after a whole day's isolation, first made me realise what an enormous distance had for so many hours separated me physically and mentally from mankind. Suddenly all the lights were extinguished, and only a few tiny twinkling points remained. It was the hour of curfew at Zermatt, and nothing remained to us but the stars of heaven. Henceforth we alone were awake in the whole vast region of the Matterhorn; travellers were asleep in their comfortable beds, and crows in their lofty nests; we were walking on the back of the sleeping giant. But only our bodies were awake and moving by the force of inertia; the cold light air of the heights kept them awake, while our minds were already asleep. Such exertions as ours had been can only be endured high up in the mountains.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

## MOUNTAIN TOPS

[Monte Rosa is the second peak in height in the Alps, 15,217 feet.]

A WORLD of clouds and mountains lay beneath me. Switzerland, with its pomp of summits, was clear and grand; Italy was also grand, but more than half obscured. Dark cumulus and dark crag vied in savagery, while at other places white snow and white clouds held equal rivalry. The scooped valleys of Monte Rosa itself were magnificent, all gleaming in the bright sunlight—tossed and torn at intervals, and sending from their rents and walls the magical blue of the ice. Ponderous *névés* lay upon the mountains, apparently motionless, but suggesting motion; sluggish, but indicating irresistible dynamic energy, which moved them slowly to their doom in the warmer valleys below. I thought of my position: it was the first time that a man had stood alone upon that wild peak, and were the imagination let loose amid the surrounding agencies and permitted to dwell upon the perils which separated the climber from his kind, I dare say curious feelings might have been engendered. But I was prompt to quell all thoughts which might lessen my strength, or interfere with the calm application of it.

(1) Monte  
Rosa

Once indeed an accident made me shudder. While taking the cork from a bottle which is deposited on the top, and which contains the names of those who have ascended the mountain, my axe slipped out of my hand, and slid some thirty feet away from me. The thought of losing it made my flesh creep, for without it descent would be utterly impossible. I regained it, and looked upon it with an affection which might be bestowed upon a living thing, for it was literally my staff of life under the circumstances. One look more over the cloud-capped mountains of Italy, and then I turned my back upon them, and commenced the descent.

John Tyndall.

*Glaciers of the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

[The Finsteraarhorn is the highest peak of the Bernese Oberland (14,040 feet). It was first scaled in 1812. Often concealed from the neighbouring valleys, it stands out as a needle-like peak in distant panoramic views of the Oberland mountains, and is visible from both Bern and Milan.]

(2) The  
Finsteraar-  
horn

It is difficult to convey any just impression of the scene from the summit of the Finsteraarhorn; one might, it is true, arrange the visible mountains in a list, stating their heights and distances, and leaving the imagination to furnish them with peaks and pinnacles, to build the precipices, polish the snow, rend the glaciers, and cap the highest summits with appropriate clouds. But if imagination did its best in this way, it would hardly exceed the reality, and would certainly omit many details which contribute to the grandeur of the scene itself. The various shapes of the mountains, some grand, some beautiful, bathed in yellow sunshine, or lying black and riven under the frown of impervious cumuli; the pure white peaks, cornices, bosses, and amphitheatres; the blue ice rifts, the stratified snow-precipices, the glaciers issuing from the hollows of the eternal hills, and stretching like frozen serpents through the sinuous valleys: the lower cloud field—itsself an empire of vaporous hills—shining with dazzling whiteness, while here and there grim summits, brown by nature, and black by contrast, pierce through it like volcanic islands through a shining

sea—add to this the consciousness of one's position which clings to one unconsciously, that undercurrent of emotion which surrounds the question of one's personal safety, at a height of more than 14,000 feet above the sea, and which is increased by the weird strange sound of the wind surging with the full deep boom of the distant sea against the precipice behind, or rising to higher cadences as it forces itself through the crannies of the weatherworn rocks—all conspire to render this scene from the Finsteraarhorn worthy of the monarch of the Bernese Alps.

John Tyndall.

*Glaciers of the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

[The Dent de Jaman (6160 feet high) is a peak near Montreux and commands a magnificent view.]

At last I stood upon the topmost crag; and what a vision it opened! For to the East was the line of Oberland ranges—the white peaks of Jungfrau and Wetterhorn, Giant and Monk—to the South the silver aiguilles of Mont Blanc, the Dent du Midi, all his sullen fangs powdered with fresh snow, the Diablerets and the long rasping vista of the Savoy Alps; westwards the soft expanse of Lemman, Swiss lowlands, and the distant Jura, studded with busy towns, thriving villages, orchards, pastures, churches, vineyards in their flowing vintages, industry, plenty, peace and health, as if Earth and Man had combined to frame a paradise.

(3) The Jaman

All this in one inexhaustible panorama. All that Nature has of sweetest, richest, dearest—of hardest, wildest, most grim, most deathly. Satiated with the splendour and the manifold sides of this landscape, I slowly tramped down across rocks, meadows and orchards, and as I came down at last upon the beaming lake-side, I felt it would almost be a relief if only, like one of Rousseau's *petits maîtres*, I could vent the emotion in tears.

There is hardly a spot round this most poetic and historical corner of Europe, this Lake Lemman and its neighbouring valleys and mountains, but what recalls to us some line of poetry, some passage of romance, a great literary triumph, a memorable conflict, an illustrious career, an heroic death. Poets made the charm of Greece. But poets, romancers, dramatists, moralists, historians, theologians,



artists—all combine to give a special halo of charm to the Alps and the Alpine world at large. Byron, Rousseau, Voltaire, Gibbon, Shelley, Coleridge, Turner, Ruskin, Schiller, Manzoni, Scott—have all stamped on the mind of Europe their special ideas of this region.

Rousseau was the first to see its poetry, but he saw only one side of it. Coleridge chanted a magnificent hymn in the valley of Mont Blanc. Shelley loved the sea too much to be the true lover of the Alps. The lover, the poet, the Prophet of the Alps is Byron. Only he felt all the beauty, all the majesty, all the humanity, all the terror of the Alps—the pastoral simplicity, the love-lorn memories, the flashing storms, thundering avalanches, stupendous cataracts of the Higher Alps, the awful solitudes of the Upper Snowfields, where Man stands fearless and even masterful face to face with the very Spirit of Earth.

Frederic Harrison.  
*My Alpine Jubilee.*  
Smith, Elder and Co.

[A mountain of 10,245 feet in the Tyrol.]

(4) The Summit of the  
Gross-Seehorn

A GLORIOUS, incomparably beautiful view was spread before our eyes, enhanced by especially beautiful colouring. Before us rose the Bernina, a grand, glittering mass of white, flanked by the Piz Palü, Roseg, Scerscen, and other peaks of the range, bathed in the soft glory of the morning sun; in the distance were visible the swowy giants of the Oberland, with the Finsteraarhorn and Aletschhorn showing up more prominently than the others; whilst away in the horizon the softer outlines of the Vorarlberg and Algäu ranges afforded a welcome relief to the eye from the dazzling brilliancy of the snow mountains in their hazy tints of pale green, merging gradually into even tenderer hues of purple and violet—a picture once seen never to be forgotten. Who can enjoy the indescribable beauties of such a magnificent Alpine view without realising that mountaineering has indeed fascinations beyond those of other sports, and without experiencing a sensation of being above the common cares of the world; of being in a figurative as well as in the actual sense elevated into a purer, rarer atmosphere?

Norman Neruda.  
*The Climbs of Norman Neruda.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.



## WINTER

[At a time when many Englishmen go to Switzerland in winter this early account ought to be interesting.]

THERE are dreams and dreams. The special merit of the mountain structure is in the harmonious blending of certain strains of emotion not elsewhere to be enjoyed together. The winter Alps are melancholy, as everything sublime is more or less melancholy. The melancholy is the spontaneous recognition by human nature of its own pettiness when brought into immediate contact with what we please to regard as eternal and infinite. It is the starting into vivid consciousness of that sentiment which poets and preachers have tried, with varying success, to crystallise into definite figures and formulae; which is necessarily more familiar to a man's mind, as he is more habitually conversant with the vastest objects of thought; and which is stimulated in the mountains in proportion as they are less dominated by the petty and temporary activities of daily life. In death, it is often said, the family likeness comes out which is obscured by individual peculiarities during active life. So in this living death or cataleptic trance of the mountains, they carry the imagination more easily to their permanent relations with epochs indefinitely remote.

The Alps in  
Winter

The very daylight has an unreal glow. The noisy summer life is suspended. A scarce audible hush seems to be whispered throughout the region. The first glacier stream that you meet strikes the keynote of the prevailing melody. In summer the torrent comes down like a charge of cavalry—all rush and roar and foam and fury—turbid with the dust ground from the mountain's flanks by the ice-share, and spluttering and writhing in its bed like a creature in the agonies of strangulation. In winter it is transformed into the likeness of one of the gentle brooks that creep round the roots of Scawfell, or even one of those sparkling trout-streams that slide through a water-meadow beneath Stonehenge. It is perfectly transparent. It babbles round rocks instead of clearing them at a bound. It can at most fret away the edges

of the huge white pillows of snow that cap the boulders. High up it can only show itself at intervals between smothering snow-beds which form continuous bridges. Even the thundering fall of the Handeck becomes a gentle thread of pure water creeping behind a broad sheet of ice, more delicately carved and moulded than a lady's veil, and so diminished in volume that one wonders how it has managed to festoon the broad rock faces with so vast a mass of pendent icicles. The pulse of the mountains is beating low; the huge arteries through which the life-blood courses so furiously in summer have become a world too wide for this trickle of pellucid water. If one is still forced to attribute personality to the peaks, they are clearly in a state of suspended animation. They are spell-bound, dreaming of dim abysses of past time or of the summer that is to recall them to life. They are in a trance like that of the Ancient Mariner when he heard strange spirit voices conversing overhead in mysterious murmurs.

The Alps alone possess the merit of at once soothing and stimulating. The tender half-tones, due to the vaporous air, the marvellous delicacy of light and shade on the snow-piled ranges, and the subtlety of line, which suggests that some sensitive agent has been moulding the snow-covering to every gentle contour of the surface, act like the media which allow the light-giving rays to pass, whilst quenching the rays of heat; they transmit the soothing and resist the depressing influences of nature. The snow on a half-buried chalet suggests a kind hand laid softly on a sick man's brows. And yet the nerves are not relaxed. The air is bright and bracing as the purest breeze on the seashore, without the slightest trace of languor. It has the inspiring quality of the notorious 'wild North-Easter' without its preposterous bluster. Even in summer the same delicious atmosphere may be breathed amongst the higher snow-fields in fine weather. In winter it descends to the valleys, and the nerves are strung as firmly as those of a race-horse in training, without being over-excited.

Leslie Stephen.  
*The Playground of Europe.*  
 Longmans, Green and Co.

ALPINE PHASES

[A very good instance of Tyndall's mingling of the scientific and the picturesque.]

SOME distance above the Montanvert—opposite to the Echelets (1) *The Mer de Glace*—the glacier, in passing down an incline, is rent by deep fissures, between each two of which a ridge of ice intervenes. At first the edges of these ridges are sharp and angular, but they are soon sculptured off by the action of the sun. The bearing of the Mer de Glace being approximately north and south, the sun at mid-day shines down the glacier, or rather very obliquely across it; and the consequence is, that the fronts of the ridges, which look downward, remain in shadow all the day, while the backs of the ridges, which look up the glacier, meet the direct stroke of the solar rays. The ridges thus acted upon have their hindmost angles wasted off and converted into slopes which represent the back of a wave, while the opposite sides of the ridges which are protected from the sun preserve their steepness, and represent the front of the wave.

Tyndall.

*Glaciers of the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

[An early description from *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, by one of the most distinguished early members of the Alpine Club, Edward Shirley Kennedy.]

As we approached the town of Samaden, the sun was setting (2) *The Evening Glow* and at the same moment the glaciers of Rosegg and Tschierva, as well as the heights of Pizzo Rosegg and Pizzo Bernina, whence they flow, burst for the first time on our sight. That beautiful *Abend-gluh*, that 'evening-glow' which, as the sun descends, tints the higher snows, met our gaze. With this peculiar and attractive feature of the upper regions nearly all Swiss travellers are familiar. The enthusiastic tiro has admired it from the Righi, and the cragsman has hailed it when seen from his night encampment high up on the mountain-side: but it has rarely fallen to the lot of any to witness its display in greater perfection. As our eye is dwelling upon this glory of the eventide, the thought that the ruby coronet is resting upon the head of the giant whom we

propose to attack, adds not a little to the charm. That giant is now calmly resting in soft tranquillity, before he assumes his cold, grey night-mantle, and retires from the glare of day ; and he looks as though the foot of childhood might tread, without difficulty and without danger, upon the placid wreaths of snow that twine themselves around his brow. And now, while evening is drawing on apace, the ruddy warmth that suffused the Alpine realms is no longer seen ; each mountain outline grows less and less distinct, and the whole range is rapidly disappearing. Another minute, and night, that has already claimed the valleys as her own, will assert her dominion over even the towering monarchs of the land. But no ! The wondrous effects of the second illumination descend upon the ice-world above ; subdued yet still glowing hues tint once more the snowy summits, and the western light, with unwonted potency, throws from the mountains a shadow, soft yet distinct, upon the undulating snow-field beyond. At the same time, the opposite horizon, as if in rivalry, is bathed in light, and in another moment the moon, nearly at her full, rises in the east. But still some time elapses before the west yields to the moon's increasing power, and long, flickering shadows, still tending towards the east, attest, like the wavering plumes of an outnumbered host, that, though the battle may be lost, the bodyguards of the sovereign disdain to quit the field so long as their lord is seen striving for the mastery.

Edward Shirley Kennedy.  
*Peaks, Passes and Glaciers.*

## EXILE

[These sonnets are by John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), poet and prose-writer, who was obliged to live abroad at Davos, Grisons, on account of his health. That explains the tone and theme of these passages.]

### I

Winter Nights  
in the High  
Alps

NOTES of a mute, not melancholy world,  
A world of snows and darkness and moon-sheen,  
Of still crystalline air and stars serene,  
And stationary pines in slumber furled :  
Notes of the sober night, when drift is whirled

By tireless winds over the solemn scene,  
 When the lake-pavement groans, and mists between  
 The shadowy mountain tops are coldly curled :  
 Notes of a meditative man who walks  
 Those white fields and that ice-floor all alone,  
 Yet draws warm life from winter's frozen wells :  
 Notes of a soul that most divinely talks  
 Unto herself in silence, and hath known  
 The God that in the mystic moon-world dwells.

## III

With you I may not dwell. Yet man is great ;  
 And the mind triumphs over place and time,  
 I therefore, doomed to weave my lonely rhyme,  
 Here 'mid these pines, these moon-scenes desolate,  
 Have found therein a joy that mocks at fate ;  
 And stationed on a specular mount sublime,  
 Have scanned yon fields low-lying, whence I climb  
 To commune with the stars inviolate.  
 The sempiternal stars, the flawless snows,  
 The crystal gems fashioned by art of frost,  
 The thin pure wind that whence it listeth blows,  
 The solitude whereon the snow is tossed,  
 In contemplation of the world's huge woes ;  
 These things suffice. Life's labour is not lost.

## IV

Friends have I found here too : this peasant folk,  
 Comradely, frank, athletic : men who draw  
 Their lineage from a race that never saw  
 Fear on the field, but with firm sinewy stroke  
 Those knightly ranks, Burgundian, Austrian, broke,  
 And bade the Italian tyrant far withdraw ;  
 These vales, these hills have known no lord but law  
 Since freedom for this people first awoke.

Their joys austere, their frugal style be mine ;  
 Low houses builded of the rude rough stone,  
 Raftered and panelled with smooth native pine ;  
 Here let me rest heart-whole, nor rest alone ;  
 High thoughts be my companions ; words divine  
 Of poets, these are still the poet's own.

## Resignation

NEVER, oh never more shall I behold  
 A sunrise on the glacier—stars of morn  
 Paling in primrose round the crystal horn ;  
 Soft curves of crimson mellowing into gold  
 O'er sapphire chasm, and silvery snow-field cold ;  
 Fire that o'erfloods the horizon ; beacons borne  
 From wind-worn peak to storm-swept peak forlorn ;  
 Clear hallelujahs through heaven's arches rolled.  
 Never, oh never more these feet shall feel  
 The firm elastic tissue of upland turf,  
 Or the crisp edge of the high rocks ; or cling  
 Where the embattled cliffs beneath them reel  
 Through cloud-wreaths eddying like the Atlantic surf,  
 Far, far above the wheeling eagle's wing.

John Addington Symonds.  
*Vagabunduli Libellus.*  
 Kegan Paul, Trench and Co.

## UNFORGOTTEN HOURS !'

OH, unforgotten hours, for how many causes is your memory dear ! What can a man say who struggles to recall you ? how tell, how remember with method or completeness the full measure of exhilaration—

Trasumanar significar per verba  
 Non si poria—

the tramp in silence under the morning stars ; the hush which precedes the dawn, and the glowing circles of sunlight round the distant peaks ; the ring of the crisp ice in the early morn ; the study of the path, and the halt merry with shouts and jests ; the snatched meal, preposterous but delicious ; the grappling with

some mad ice-torrent, and the cunning path wound upwards through a chaos of *séracs*; the wild and fairy loveliness of cavern and chasm; then the upward strain across some blinding wall of snow; the crash of the ice-axe and the whirr of the riven blocks; the clutch at the hewn step; the balanced tread along the jagged ridge; the spring from the last crag, and then the keen cheer from the summit?

Frederic Harrison.

*My Alpine Jubilee.*

Smith, Elder and Co.

## III

## THE ALPS IN ADVENTURE

## (I) THE PIONEERS

## SHAKESPEARE

**The Pioneers in Shakespeare** [THE Alps presented themselves to Shakespeare, as to all men of the sixteenth century, as places of adventure and suffering. I put together here the references direct to the Alps. All of them are full of the spirit of dread.]

(Octavius Cæsar apostrophising Antony)

**The First recorded Alpine Adventure**

ON the Alps

It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,  
Which some did die to look on.

*Antony and Cleopatra.* Act I. Scene iv.

(Mowbray's Speech)

**An Adventurous Offer**

I do defy him, and I spit at him ;  
Call him a slanderous coward and a villain :  
Which to maintain I would allow him odds,  
And meet him, were I tied to run afoot  
Even to the frozen ridges of the Alps,  
Or any other ground inhabitable,  
Where ever Englishman durst set his foot.

*King Richard II.* Act I. Scene i.

(The French King to his Nobles)

**An Avalanche Exhortation**

HIGH dukes, great princes, barons, lords and knights,  
For your great seats now quit you of great shames.  
Bar Harry England, that sweeps through our land



With pennons painted in the blood of Harfleur :  
 Rush on his host, as doth the melted snow  
 Upon the valleys, whose low vassal seat  
 The Alps doth spit and void his rheum upon !  
 Go down upon him, you have power enough,  
 And in a captive chariot into Rouen  
 Bring him our prisoner !

*Henry V.* Act III. Scene v.

## WINDHAM

[This early narrative was published by Mr. Windham (1744), and is now a rare tract.<sup>1</sup> It describes the first visit by an English party to the Savoyard glaciers. It gives a very interesting impression of the earliest mountain adventures. I leave the spelling exactly as it is in the original narrative. I take up the narrative at the start from Chamonix.]

WE took with us several peasants, some to be our guides, and others to carry wine and provisions. These people were so much persuaded that we should never be able to get through with our task, that they took with them candles and instruments to strike fire, in case we should be overcome with fatigue, and be obliged to spend the night on the mountain. In order to prevent those among us who were the most in wind, from fatiguing the rest, by pushing on too fast, we made the following rules: That he who left the way should go a slow and even pace: That who ever found himself fatigued, or out of breath, might call for a halt; And, lastly, that whenever we found a spring we should drink some of our wine, mixed with water, and fill up the bottles, we had emptied, with water, to serve us at other Halts where we should find none. These precautions were so useful to us, that, perhaps, had we not observed them, the peasants would not have been deceived in their conjectures.

**The First  
 Tourists on  
 the Mer de  
 Glace**

<sup>1</sup> It was written in 1741, and published in 1744. See the reprint in the *Annals of Mont Blanc*, by Mr. C. E. Mathews, Appendix, p. 329. Previous accounts of glaciers had been laid before the Royal Society.

We set out about noon, the 22nd of *June*, and crossed the *Arve* over a wooden bridge. Most maps place the *Glacieres* on the same side with *Chamoigny*, but this is a mistake. We were quickly at the foot of the Mountain, and began to ascend by a very steep path through a Wood of Firs and Larche Trees. We made many Halts to refresh ourselves, and take breath, but we kept on at a good Rate. After we had passed the Wood, we came to a kind of Meadow, full of large Stones, and pieces of Rocks, that were broke off, and fallen down from the Mountain; the Ascent was so steep that we were obliged sometimes to cling to them with our Hands, and make use of Sticks, with sharp Irons at the End, to support ourselves. Our Road lay slant Ways, and we had several Places to cross where the *Avalanches* of Snow were fallen, and had made terrible Havock; there was nothing to be seen but Trees torn up by the Roots, and large Stones, which seemed to lie without any Support; every Step we set, the Ground gave way, the Snow which was mixed with it made us slip, and had it not been for our Staffs, and our Hands, we must many times have gone down the Precipice. We had an uninterrupted view quite to the Bottom of the Mountain, and the steepness of the Descent, join'd to the height where we were, made a View terrible enough to make most People's Heads turn. In short, after climbing with great Labour for four Hours and three Quarters, we got to the Top of the Mountain; from whence we had the pleasure of beholding Objects of an extraordinary Nature. We were on the Top of a Mountain, which, as well as we could judge, was at least twice as high as Mount *Saleve*, from thence we had a full view of the *Glacieres*. I own to you that I am extremely at a loss how to give a right idea of it; as I know no one thing which I have ever seen that has the least resemblance to it.

The Description which Travellers give of the Seas of *Greenland* seems to come the nearest to it. You must imagine your Lake put in Agitation by a strong Wind, and frozen all at once, perhaps even that would not produce the same Appearance.

The *Glacieres* consist of three large Valleys, that form a kind of Y, the Tail reaches into the *Val d'Aoste*, and the two Horns into the Valley of *Chamoigny*, the Place where we ascended was between

them, from whence we saw plainly the Valley, which forms one of these Horns.

I had unluckily left at *Chamoigny* a pocket Compass, which I had carried with me, so that I could not well tell the Bearings as to its Situation; but I believe it is to be pretty nearly from North to South. These Valleys, although at the top of a high Mountain, are surrounded with other Mountains; the Tops of which being naked and craggy Rocks, shoot up immensely high; something resembling old *Gothic* Buildings or Ruines, nothing grows upon them, they are all the year round covered with Snow; and our Guides assured us, that neither the *Chamois*, nor any Birds, ever went so high as the top of them.

Those who search after Crystal, go in the Month of August to the Foot of these Rocks, and strike against them with Pick-axes; if they hear them resound as if they were hollow, they work there, and opening the rock, they find Caverns full of Crystallisations. We should have been very glad to have gone there, but the Season was not enough advanced, the Snow not being yet sufficiently melted. As far as our Eye-sight could reach, we saw nothing but this Valley; the Height of the Rocks which surrounded it, made it impossible for the Eye to judge exactly how wide it was; but I imagine it must be near three quarters of a League. Our Curiosity did not stop here, we were resolved to go down upon the Ice: we had about four hundred Yards to go down, the Descent was excessively steep, and all of a dry crumbling Earth, mixt with Gravel, and little loose Stones, which afforded us no firm footing; so that we went down partly falling, and partly sliding on our Hands and Knees. At length we got upon the Ice, where our Difficulty ceased, for that was extremely rough, and afforded us good footing; we found in it an infinite number of Cracks, some we could step over, others were several Feet wide. These Cracks were so deep, that we could not even see to the Bottom; those who go in search of Crystal are often lost in them, but their Bodies are generally found again after some Days, perfectly well preserved. All our Guides assured us, that these Cracks change continually, and that the whole *Glaciere* has a kind of Motion. In going up the Mountain we often heard something like a Clap of Thunder,

which, as we were informed by our Guides, was caused by fresh Cracks then making; but as there were none made while we were upon the Ice, we could not determine whether it was that, or *Avalanches* of Snows, or perhaps Rocks falling: though since Travellers observe, that in *Greenland* the Ice cracks with a Noise that resembles Thunder, it might very well be what our Guides told us. As in all countries of Ignorance People are extremely superstitious, they told us many strange stories of Witches, etc., who came to play their pranks upon the *Glacieres*, and dance to the sound of Instruments. We should have been surprised if we had not been entertained in these Parts, with some such idle Legends. The *Bouquetins* go in Herds often to the number of fifteen or sixteen upon the Ice, we saw none of them; there were some *Chamois* which we shot at, but at too great a distance to do any Execution.

There is Water continually issuing out of the *Glacieres*, which the People look on as so very wholesome that they say it may be drank of in any Quantities without Danger, even when one is hot with Exercise.

The Sun shone very hot, and the Reverberation of the Ice, and circumjacent Rocks, caused a great deal of thaw'd Water to lie in all the Cavities of the Ice; but I fancy it freezes here constantly as soon as Night comes on.

Our Guides assured us, that, in the time of their Fathers, the *Glaciere* was but small, and that there was even a Passage thro' these Valleys, by which they could go into the *Val d'Aoste* in six hours: But that the *Glaciere* was so much increased that the Passage was then quite stopped up, and that it went on increasing every Year.

We found on the Edge of the *Glaciere* several pieces of Ice, which we took at first for Rocks, being as big as a House, these were pieces quite separate from the *Glaciere*. It is difficult to conceive how they came to be formed there.

Having remained about half an Hour upon the *Glaciere*, and having drank there in ceremony Admiral *Vernon's* Health, and success to the *British* Arms, we climb'd to the Summit, from whence we came, with incredible Difficulty, the Earth giving way at every step we set. From thence, after having rested ourselves a

few Minutes, we began to descend, and arrived at *Chamouny* just about Sun-set, to the great Astonishment of all the People of the Place, and even of our Guides, who owned to us they thought we should not have gone through with our Undertaking.

William Windham (1717-1761).  
*An Account of the Glacieres or Ice Alps of Savoy, etc.*  
 London. P. Martel, 1744. Price 1s. 6d.

## DE SAUSSURE

[The tale of early Alpine adventure is bound up with Mont Blanc, the greatest of the Alps both in size and height (15,781 feet high), and one of the first to be conquered. Every one has heard vaguely of the story of that conquest—the persistent ambition of the scientist De Saussure, the fearless daring of the guide Balmat, and the steady zeal of Dr. Paccard. There have been, of course, many discussions on the respective merits of these heroes. Every reader must judge for himself. I give, therefore, the full text of the chief original authorities as to these climbs—the narratives of De Saussure and Dumas's famous interview with Balmat. It is now conclusively proved that Dr. Paccard's intended book was never published (see the article in the *Alpine Journal*, February 1912). The Story of  
Mont Blanc

De Saussure's narratives are very careful and valuable records of these early ascents. He combines in a remarkable degree accuracy of observation and brilliancy of descriptive power.

This passage is very interesting as showing the sufferings of the early mountaineers.]

I USED to think of the summit of Mont Blanc as absolutely inaccessible. In my first visit to Chamounix in 1760 and 1761 I had published in all the valley a statement that I would give a substantial reward to all or any who should find a way to the Summit. I had even promised to pay the expenses of those who should make attempts without success. These promises all ended in nothing. Pierre Simon made one effort from the side of Tacul, another from the Glacier des Boissons, and returned without any hope of success. (1) De Saussure's  
Attempts

Fifteen years later, however,—that is to say in 1775,—four guides from Chamounix tried to reach the summit by the mountain of La Côte. This mountain, which forms a ridge almost parallel

to the Glacier des Boissons, ends with ice and snow continuing without interruption right to the summit of Mont Blanc. There are certain difficulties to surmount in reaching this ice, and in crossing the first crevasses: but once you have surmounted these difficulties nothing seemed left except the length of the route and the problem of going up and down that great distance in the space of a single day. I say a 'single day' because the natives of the country do not think that one ought to hazard a night on the snows.

These four climbers were very successful in surmounting the first obstacles. They then set themselves to follow a great snow-valley which seemed to conduct straight to the summit of the mountain. Everything seemed to promise them complete success. They enjoyed the best weather conceivable. The crevasses met by them were not excessively large, nor were the slopes too steep. But the refraction of the sun on the snow, and the stagnation of the air in that valley created, according to their own description, a condition of suffocating heat, and caused them at the same time such a distaste for the food they carried that they became exhausted with starvation and fatigue, and the result was that they had the supreme vexation of having to return on their tracks without having met any really tangible and insurmountable obstacle. It was clear, however, that they had made great efforts, for they were very exhausted with their expedition, and all became more or less ill.

This failure did not prevent another party of three guides from Chamounix (Coutet, Lombard Meunier called Jorasse, and Carrier) making another attempt by the same route in 1783. They went to pass the night on the top of the mountain of La Côte, crossed the glacier and made their way up the same valley of snow. They had already reached a great height, and were going forward and upwards with courage when one of them, the most robust of the three, was suddenly seized with an absolutely irrepressible desire to sleep. He wanted the other two to leave him and continue without him. But they could not make up their minds to abandon him and to leave him to go to sleep in the snow, feeling certain that he would perish of sunstroke. They therefore



gave up their enterprise and went back all together to Chamounix. This desire for sleep produced by the clarity of the air, passed away from the moment that they reached a dense atmosphere. It is very probable that even if the desire for sleep had not stopped these good men they would never have been able to reach the summit of the mountain. For although they had reached a great height, they had a long way still to go, and the heat troubled them greatly—a very surprising thing at that height. They had lost their appetites, and the wine and food which they carried had lost all attraction for them. One of them, Jorasse, told me seriously that it was useless to carry any provisions on this expedition; and that if he had to return by this route he would carry nothing but a parasol and a bottle of scent! As I pictured this great strong mountaineer climbing the snows with a little parasol in one hand and a bottle of 'Sans Pareil' in the other, that image had in it something so strange and ridiculous that nothing could bring before me more clearly the difficulty of his enterprise, and, consequently, its absolute impossibility for people who have neither the head nor the muscles of a good Chamounix guide.

Nevertheless, M. Bourrit wished to try this route again at the end of the same season. He too slept on the top of the mountain of La Côte. But a storm which came on unexpectedly forced him to make his way quickly back to the glacier.

As for myself, after the information given me by those who had attacked the mountain on this side, I regarded success by that route as absolutely impossible, and that was the opinion of all sensible people in Chamounix.

M. Bourrit, who still took more interest than I did in the conquest of Mont Blanc, thought that he ought to make another attempt from another side. He collected information from all quarters, and he learnt at last that two hunters in pursuing some chamois, had mounted by some arêtes of rock right up to a very great height—a height so great that there were left only four to five hundred 'toises' (about 2500 feet) to mount by some easy slopes of snow from that point to the very summit of Mont Blanc. The air on those slopes, too, was so easy and light that there was

no fear of that kind of suffocation felt in the valley of snow which opened out from the mountain of La Côte.

Charmed with this discovery, M. Bourrit hastened to 'La Gene' the village where these hunters lived, and engaged them immediately to make a new attempt with him by this route. He left the village that very evening, and at daybreak he arrived with them at the very foot of the steep rocks which had to be climbed. The morning broke with an extraordinary intensity of frost, and M. Bourrit, chilled by the cold and paralysed with fatigue could not follow his guide up the rocks. Leaving him one guide at the foot of the rocks, two of them mounted alone, not only to the top of these same rocks, but still further ahead into the snows. They said that they reached to the very foot of the summit of Mont Blanc, from which they were separated by a gully of ice, across which, if they had more time, and some help, they would have been able to climb by ladders, and in that way would have mounted easily to the top.

This attempt was the first that inspired me with a real belief in the possibility of success. I resolved, therefore, to make a serious attempt on these lines as soon as the season permitted. I instructed two men of the country—Peter Balmat and Marie Coutet—to watch the mountain and to let me know when the melting of the snows rendered it accessible. Unhappily, the snows accumulated during the severe winter of 1784 to 1785, and those which fell so freely during the cold and rainy summer which followed that winter postponed any possibility of making an attempt until the middle of September 1785.

I always prefer to make efforts of this kind alone with my guides. But M. Bourrit, who had been the first to discover this route, was anxious that we should make this attempt together. I consented with pleasure. We even took with us his son, a young man of twenty-one years, whose talents seemed to promise great success in life. His love of botany and of the great views of nature to be seen in the Alps have often taken him in his father's footsteps.

I had meant to sleep as high as possible beneath blankets arranged in the form of tents. But M. Bourrit had the happy



idea of sending two days in advance three Chamounix men to construct for us some shelter at the foot of the Aiguille (needle) of Goûté a sort of stone hut or cabin<sup>1</sup>—an excellent safeguard against the perils of storm, in case we had the misfortune to meet one.

We slept at Bionassay<sup>2</sup> where was our rendezvous, and early on the following morning one of the Chamounix guides who had been working at the construction of this cabin came to tell us that it was nearly ready, but that it was necessary to carry up another load of pine wood, to render the roof more solid. We engaged a villager to carry the load; two others carried straw, and yet two more brought firewood. Others carried food and my instruments, and so in all we formed a caravan of sixteen or seventeen persons.

I had hoped that we should be able to go for nearly two leagues on our mules, but we could not ride on them for more than a league. The elder Mr. Bourrit went on foot the whole way.

. . . . .

We reached our cabin at half-past one o'clock, although we set out as late as eight o'clock and various little delays made us lose half an hour on the way.

The situation of our cabin was the best that could have been chosen in so wild a spot. It was built in a deep angle of the rocks, just a few feet above a snow-coloured glacier from which there poured forth a clear and fresh stream, supplying all the needs of the caravan. Right in the front of the cabin rose the Aiguille of Goûté by way of which we were going to attack Mont Blanc. Two of our guides who had already climbed that Aiguille showed the ridge by which we should have to mount on the morrow. They even offered to make advantage of the rest of the daylight by reconnoitring the mountain, choosing the easiest route and making steps in the hard snow. We accepted their offer with pleasure.

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> Still existing.

<sup>2</sup> I summarise here several paragraphs of detail.

[M. Saussure then describes his failure to make satisfactory experiments in boiling water owing to the defects of his instruments, and goes on :—]

But the beauty of the evening and the magnificence of the sunset view consoled me for this failure. The evening mists, which tempered with a light veil the rays of the sun and half hid the immense stretch of country at our feet, formed a girdle of exquisite purple which stretched round the whole western horizon. The snows at the foot of Mont Blanc, tinged with this light, present a spectacle of rare and magnificent beauty. As the mist fell and condensed, this girdle became narrower and deepened in colour, until at last it appeared to be scarlet as blood, and at the same time some little clouds which had risen above this rim of mist sparkled with a light so vivid that they seemed to be stars or meteors of fire.

I went back again to this view when the veil of night had completely fallen. The sky had then become perfectly clear and cloudless. The mist had quite gone, except in the very depths of the valleys. The brilliant stars, shining without the smallest approach to a twinkle, threw over the mountains a light extremely pale and feeble, but sufficient to enable us to distinguish both the shapes and the distances. The profound calm and deep silence which reigned over the whole of this vast extent of country, increased by the imagination, filled me with a sort of terror. It almost seemed as if I had survived alone in this universe, and that I saw the corpse of the universe stretched beneath my feet. However sombre such ideas may be, they have a sort of fascination difficult to resist. I turned my eyes more often towards this dark solitude than towards Mont Blanc, whose snows were so bright and phosphorescent that they gave an impression of actual movement and life. But the air on this isolated point was so keen that I was forced to beat a retreat to the cabin.

The coldest moment of the night was three-quarters of an hour after sunset; the thermometer went down to two degrees below freezing-point. An hour later it rose by one degree, and by another during the night. But we were very pleased to have the fire. We should have fared ill without it.

This cabin, this refuge so interesting to us, deserves a word or two of description. It was about eight feet round, seven feet long and four feet high. It was shut in by three walls, and the rock against which it leant made the fourth. Flat stones, placed on another without cement, formed these walls, and similar stones, held together by three or four branches of pine-wood formed the roof. An opening of three feet square in the wall formed the entrance. Two mattresses placed on the earth were our beds, and a parasol opened and placed against the entrance formed at once door and window.

My friends were upset by the rarity of the air. They digested their dinner badly, and they could not take any supper. As for me I am never upset by the rarity of the air unless I am taking violent exercise. At one time I slept a light and tranquil sleep; at another my mind filled with such sweet and amusing ideas that I was quite sorry when I dropped asleep again. From my mattress, when the umbrella was pushed aside, I could see the snows, the ice, and the rocks situated below our cabin; and the rising of the moon gave a most singular beauty to this scene. Our guides passed the night variously, some curled up in holes of the rocks, others wrapped in cloaks or blankets, and yet others crouching round a little fire which they kept feeding with the wood which we had carried up.

As M. Bourrit had experienced an insupportable cold about sunrise at the same spot and in the same season of the previous year, we decided not to set forth until six o'clock.<sup>1</sup> But from the moment that the first glimmer of dawn appeared in the sky I mounted to my observatory and there awaited the rising of the sun. I found the view very beautiful, but less exquisite than at sunset. The mists, being less condensed, no longer rimmed the horizon with a girdle so distinct and vividly painted as on the previous evening. But as a consolation I observed a singular phenomena. That was the appearance of a series of great rays of purple light shooting from the horizon exactly opposite the rising sun. These were not clouds, but a sort of rare type of mist.

<sup>1</sup> Fatal decision! But M. Bourrit was evidently not a man to go tiger-hunting with.

There were six rays. They radiated to five or six degrees away from their centre, which was just above the horizon.

We took the precaution of drinking a basin of soup before starting to fortify us against cold; we then carefully divided the clothes and food among the guides and we made our start at a quarter past six, full of hope.

[M. de Saussure then devotes four paragraphs to a cartographical description of the route, and then proceeds:—]

We began by traversing the gentle slope of a glacier which separated us from the base of the Aiguille, and in twenty minutes we arrived at the foot of the rocks by which we had to mount in climbing Mont Blanc from this side. This ridge is very steep, and the broken and disintegrated rock of which it is composed does not offer a very comfortable means of progress. Nevertheless we climbed it quite gaily in a little over an hour: the temperature was exactly as we might have chosen for ourselves; the air just between three and four degrees below freezing-point seemed only cold enough to prevent us being overheated in climbing upwards: we could enjoy the keen and stimulating pleasure of measuring our progress by the steady lowering of the peaks which had seemed at first higher than ours.

I had a very vivid, and perhaps almost puerile, moment of joy when, after having climbed for nearly twenty-five minutes, I suddenly caught sight of the Lake of Geneva. It was the first time that I had climbed up the slopes of Mont Blanc to a point sufficiently high to give me a view of the Lake. I had also the pleasure of finding two beautiful specimens of Alpine flowers.

When we had arrived at the top of the rocks, we had then to climb a rather steep snow-slope to reach the glacier which forms the plateau at the base of the Aiguille; and there for the first time we required to be given a hand by our guides, who were always only too zealous to give us help. It was almost a quarter to eight when we reached that plateau. We had hoped to arrive there earlier, and as we knew that we had only achieved a

very small fraction of our enterprise, I decided not to stop to take barometrical observations.

We then made straight for the foot of the Aiguille, and we were very nearly up to it when we saw with much surprise a man who did not belong to our party climbing ahead of us from the side of the glacier of Bionnassay. The surprise turned into a cry of joy from the whole of our caravan when we recognised the brave fellow who had accompanied M. Bourrit the previous year, and had climbed with Marie Coutet almost to the summit of Mont Blanc. He had not been at home when we sent a message for him, and had not been able to start until very late the previous evening. He had ascended the mountain in the night, and had just climbed by the shortest cut to join the route which he knew we must follow. The heavily loaded guides were delighted to give him a share of their luggage, and he gaily took a place in our line.

The glacier which we were traversing ends just at that point of the Aiguille de Gôuté which is impracticable owing to its steepness. This ridge is separated from the one we had to follow by one of those precipitous couloirs I have described. We had to cross that couloir. The snow which covered it was still frozen and very hard. But happily Coutet and Gervais, who had come there in the afternoon of the previous day, had found this snow softened by the sun, and had been able to make some good steps for us to place our feet in. I dislike these traverses more than any other Alpine experience. If your feet slip you have scarcely any chance of recovering your balance: while if one is going straight up or down it is much easier to check oneself in case of a fall. Coutet wanted to climb below us in case our feet slipped. But as the slopes were far steeper there than in his proper place we refused to permit this, and we employed the same method that I invented in descending the glacier of the Aiguille de Mardi. Each of us placed ourselves between the guides who held firmly the ends of one of the great alpenstocks which they carried. This stick formed a kind of precipice railing against which we could lean for support. This railing advanced with us, gave security to our steps, and saved us from every kind of danger.

After having crossed this couloir, we came to the ridge of rock which we had to clamber along ; and it is here that our task became really difficult. We found this ridge incomparably steeper than that which had brought us to the foot of the Aiguille. The rocks which compose it are far more disintegrated, very much broken up by the force of the wind and the changes of temperature. Sometimes they kept slipping from under our feet, and sometimes they came off in our hands when we wished to pull ourselves up by them. Often not knowing what to take hold of I was compelled to seize the leg of the guide in front of me. The ascent was at times so steep that that leg was often on a level with my head. To add to our difficulties some fresh snow which had fallen only two days before had filled the cracks in the rocks and hid the really hard snow or ice which here and there lay under our feet. Often the middle of the ridge became absolutely inaccessible, and we were obliged to progress by crossing the difficult couloirs which lay beneath the ridge. At other times there were sheer gaps in the rocks, and we were forced to cross the steep snow slopes. All these obstacles steadily increased as we approached the summit of the Aiguille. At last after five hours of climbing upwards, of which three were spent on this fatiguing ridge, Peter Balmat, who was climbing in front of me, seeing not only that the gradient was becoming steadily steeper, but that the fresh snow was increasing with every step, suggested to me that I should sit down while he went on to reconnoitre. I consented all the more readily that I had not sat down since our start ; although I had sometimes taken breath, but always in an upright position, leaning upon my alpenstock. As he advanced, he kept shouting out to us not to move till he returned. He came back at the end of an hour, and brought the news that above us the quantity of new snow was so great that we could not reach the top of the rocks without great danger and fatigue, and that there we should be forced to stop, because the summit of the mountain above the rocks was covered with a foot and a half of new snow, through which it was impossible to advance. His gaiters, covered with snow right up to his knees, attested the truth of this report, and the quantity of snow round us would have sufficed to prove it. In consequence of

this report, we took unanimously, with great regret, the decision to turn back.

H. de Saussure.  
*Voyages dans les Alpes* (Copyright Trans.).

## BALMAT

[Next in order, after De Saussure's narrative of his attempts, comes the story of Balmat. It was given at Chamonix to the famous French novelist, the elder Dumas, in the form of an interview, which Dumas took down in writing. Balmat was an old man at the time of the interview (about 1830) and something must be allowed for the leakages, and perhaps even the accretions, of memory. He had had a quarrel with Paccard—an unpleasant, but unhappily not unique, episode in mountain adventure. We must, therefore, take Balmat's description of Paccard's doings—certainly not represented as heroic—with a grain of salt. The narrative is vivid and dramatic. But in this particular matter of Paccard's share in the climb it is not to be trusted. Since translating this passage, I have had the privilege of reading personal testimony, at present unpublished, which throws grave doubts on the accuracy of both Balmat and Dumas.]

(2) The  
Victory of  
Paccard and  
Balmat

As we came near the hotel I saw sitting on a bench before the door an old man of about seventy years of age. He rose and came to meet me.

Dumas's  
Narrative

It was Jacques Balmat, that intrepid guide who, after passing through a thousand dangers, had been the first to reach the highest summit of Mont Blanc, and in that way had opened the road to De Saussure. Courage had gone ahead of science.

I thanked him for having done me the honour to accept my invitation. The good fellow seemed to think that I was laughing at him. He did not seem to understand that he was to me as extraordinary as a Columbus who found an unknown world or as a Vasco who had re-found a lost world. I invited my guide to dine with his chief. He accepted my invitation with precisely the same simple courtesy as that with which he had refused my money. We took our places at table. I had ordered the dinner, and my companions seemed quite content with my selection.



At dessert I turned the conversation on to the exploits of Balmat. The old man, now a little gay and talkative with the wine of Montmeillan, asked for nothing better than to tell me his story. The surname of 'Mont Blanc' which still sticks to him shows that he is quite proud of the memories that I was bringing back to the surface. He made no attempt to cry off when I asked him to tell me every detail of his dangerous experiences. The only thing he did was to stretch out his glass, and I filled it, filling the glass of my guide at the same time. Balmat lifted his glass to his lips and said, 'With your permission, my master!'

'Certainly,' I replied. 'To your health, Balmat,' and we drank to one another's health.

'By heaven!' he cried as he took his seat, 'you are a very fine gentleman!'

Then he emptied his glass, clicked his tongue, blinked his eyes as he turned round in his seat, trying to re-collect his ideas, which had probably not been rendered any clearer by the last glass which he had swallowed.

My guide, for his part, settled himself as comfortably as possible to hear a story which he had probably heard more than once before. His arrangement, as convenient as it was simple, consisted of a half turn which he gave at the same time both to his chair and to his body. The result was that his feet were now in front of the fire, his elbow on the table, his head resting on his left hand and his glass in his right.

As for me I took my note book and pencil and made myself ready to write, so that now it is the simple and unadulterated story of Balmat that I am going to place before the reader.

'Well!' he said. 'Yes! It was in 1786. I was then twenty-five years old, which gives me to-day, this old man that you see before you, just seventy years. I was a fine fellow then—a calf like the devil's and a stomach like the stomach of hell. I could then walk for three days on end without eating. I actually did that once when I was lost on the Buet. All I did was to munch a piece of snow. I used to look up at Mont Blanc and every now



and then I used to say to myself, "Ah! my fine fellow, you look very handsome and you talk very handsomely, but one day I will get to the top of you—yes I will."—Well, at last that day—

'It was that idea that was always passing through my head, day and night. In the day time I used to climb up the Brévent where one gets as clear a view of Mont Blanc as I get of you at the present moment, and I used to pass whole hours looking for the route. "I will make one," I used to say, "if there isn't any." That's what I used to say to myself. "In any case I will get up."

'During the night it was the same with a difference. I scarcely closed my eyes, before I had taken to climbing Mont Blanc. At first I went steadily as if there was a royal road. I used to say to myself, "By Jove! I was very foolish to think it was so difficult to climb Mont Blanc." Then little by little the royal road became narrower. But still it was a fine path, like that up the Flégère, and I went on quite steadily. At last I reached some places at which the path absolutely disappeared, and I could not see my way at all. Good Heavens! the earth began to move and I sank right up to my knees. I really suffered. What a fool one is when one is dreaming!

'Well! at last I got out of that difficulty, but it became so much worse that I was obliged to go on all fours. That was a nice job! The difficulties kept getting worse and worse. I kept placing my feet on the edges of rocks and they seemed to fall off like teeth that refuse to bite. The sweat fell from me in great drops. I could hardly breathe. I was having a pretty night!

'Nevertheless, I kept going on. I was like a lizard on the side of a wall. The earth seemed to be moving from under me. That did not matter to me. I kept my eyes on the sky above me. My only idea was to reach the top, but the difficulty was my legs. There was I—who had such calves—I could not lift them! I kept digging my nails into the rocks. I felt that I was falling, and I kept saying to myself, "Jacques Balmat, my friend, unless you can catch hold of that little branch above your head there, your day has come!" That cursed branch! I touched it with the ends of my fingers. I scraped my knees, like a chimney-sweep in a chimney. Ah! there it is! I have got the branch!

'Ah! I shall never forget that night. My wife woke me with a violent blow of her fist. I had got hold of her ear, and I was pulling it, like a piece of elastic! Well, this time I said, "Jacques Balmat, you had better go and find the way for yourself." So I got out of bed and began putting on my gaiters. "Where are you going?" said my wife. "To search for crystals" I replied. I did not wish to tell her what I was contemplating. "Do not be worried if I do not return this evening," I said, "if I have not returned by nine o'clock this evening I shall be sleeping on the mountain side." I took a big stick with an iron point twice as thick and long as a mountain stick. I filled my bottle with brandy. I took a morsel of bread in my pocket and I set out.

'I had already tried several times to climb Mont Blanc by the Mer de Glace, but each time the Mont Maudit had barred my passage. Then I had tried the way by the Aiguille du Goûter but in order to get from hence to the Dôme it was necessary to cross for nearly a quarter of a league [about half an English mile] along a ridge one or two feet broad and with a drop of over 1800 feet on either side. No, thank you!

'This time I decided to try a change of route, and so I started by the way of the Montagne de la Côte. At the end of three hours I had reached the Glacier des Boissons. I crossed it. It was not very difficult at that point. Four hours later I had reached the Grands Mulets. By this time the climb had begun to get a little difficult. I had earned my breakfast. I broke a crust of bread and I drank a drop of brandy. So far, so good!

'At the time of which I am speaking they had not levelled out at the Grands Mulets the little platform which is there to-day. It was not a very comfortable place to sleep on in those days, I can tell you. That made me anxious to find out whether I could discover some place higher where I could pass the night. I searched to the right and to the left, but I could not see any spot. At last I started out afresh, trusting to God.

'At the end of two hours and a half I found a fine spot, bare and dry. The rocks showed through the snow and gave me a surface of six or seven feet square. That was all I wanted, not to sleep, but to wait for the dawn with a little less discomfort than was

possible in the snow. It was now seven o'clock in the evening. I broke my second morsel of bread. I drank another drop of brandy, and I settled myself down on the rocks where I had to pass the night. Settling down did not take me very long. My bed did not take much making up there!

'About nine o'clock I saw the shadow of night coming up to me from the valley below, like a thick smoke. It came slowly towards me. At half-past nine it had reached me, and enveloped me. But still I could see above me the last rays of the setting sun, which had hardly yet left the highest summit of Mont Blanc. I kept my eyes on those rays of the sun as long as they still remained. At last they disappeared, and the light of day left me. Turned as I was towards Chamonix I had towards my left the immense plain of snow which mounts up to the Dôme du Goûter, and on my right, within reach of my hand, a precipice of 800 feet in height. I did not dare to sleep for fear of rolling off into the abyss in the midst of my dreams. So I sat up on my knapsack and I began striking my hands and feet together in order to keep them warm. Soon the moon rose quite pale and in the midst of a circle of clouds which completely hid her about 11 o'clock. At the same time I saw coming down from the Aiguille du Goûter a villanous mist, which had no sooner reached me than it began to spit snow right in my face. Then I wrapped my head in my handkerchief and I said to the snow "Go along. Do your worst!" At each moment I heard the falling of avalanches which growled as they fell like thunder among the hills. The ice of the glaciers kept breaking away and at each break I felt the mountains tremble.

'I experienced neither hunger nor thirst. But I had a singular headache which seized me at the very top of the head and gradually came right down to my eye-brows. Throughout the whole of that time the mist never lifted. My breath was frozen against my handkerchief. The snow had saturated my clothes. I felt very soon as if I was quite naked. I doubled the rapidity of my movements and began to sing in order to chase away the whole crowd of foolish ideas which came into my head. My voice was lost in the snow. No echo came back to me. Everything seemed dead in the middle of this frozen nature. Even my very voice came

back to me with a strange sound. I fell silent, for I was really full of fear.

'At two o'clock the sky began to whiten towards the east. With the first light of the coming day I felt my courage coming back to me. The sun rose, struggling against the clouds which were covering Mont Blanc. I was always hoping that it would chase them away. But at four o'clock the clouds thickened, the sun grew weaker, and I recognised that on this day, at any rate, it would be impossible for me to go any further. So in order not to lose the whole advantage of my journey I set myself to explore the neighbourhood, and I passed the whole day in visiting the glaciers and in finding out the best way of crossing them. As the evening came, and the mist with it, I went down as far as the Bec à l'Oiseau, where night overtook me. I passed this night better than the other, for I was no longer on the ice and I was able to sleep a little.

'I woke up chilled, but as soon as the day appeared I resumed my way towards the valley, having told my wife that I would not be away more than three days. It was not until I reached the village of La Côte that my clothes thawed. I had not walked a hundred feet beyond the last house of the village when I met François Paccard, Joseph Carrier, and Jean Michel Tournier. They were all three guides, and they had with them their knapsacks, their alpenstocks, and they were dressed for a climb. I asked them where they were going. They told me they were going to bring back some goats which they had left in the charge of some small proprietors. Since these animals are not worth more than about forty sous each, I gathered from their reply that they wanted to keep me in the dark, and my conclusion was that they were going to make the same attempt that I had just failed in—all the more because M. de Saussure had promised a reward to the first man who reached the top of Mont Blanc—one or two questions which Paccard put to me as to where to find a sleeping place at the Bec à l'Oiseau, confirming me in my opinion. I told him that everything was covered with snow and it seemed to me impossible that any one could stop there. I saw them exchange a sign which I pretended not to observe. They went apart and had a little

consultation amongst themselves. Then they came and asked me to come with them, so that we could all go up together. I accepted their offer. But I had promised to return home and I did not wish to break my word to my wife. So I went back to my house and told her not to disturb herself; I changed my boots and my gaiters, and I took some more provisions. At 11 o'clock in the evening I set out again without going to bed and within an hour I rejoined my comrades at the Bec à l'Oiseau, four leagues [ten English miles] below the place where I had slept on the previous evening.

'They were sleeping curled up like marmots. I woke them up and in an instant they were on their feet, and all four of us resumed our march. That day we crossed the glacier of Tacconay. We climbed as far as the Grands Mulets where on the previous evening I had passed such a famous night; then, turning to the right, we arrived at about three o'clock at the Dôme du Goûter. Already one of our party (François Paccard) had collapsed from want of breath a little below the Grands Mulets, and we had left him lying on the coat of one of our comrades.

'Arrived at the summit of the Dôme we saw on the top of the Aiguille du Goûter the movement of a black object, which we could not quite identify. We did not know whether it was a chamois or a man. We cried out and the sound of a reply came back to us. Then, at the end of a minute when we had fallen quiet silent to hear the second cry, we heard—"Ah! you there! Wait. We wish to climb up with you." Well, we waited for them, and while we were waiting Paccard overtook us. He had quite recovered his strength. At the end of half-an-hour they all joined us. They were Pierre Balmat and Marie Coutet, who had made a bet with the others that they would arrive before they did at the Dôme du Goûter. They had lost their bet. While we were waiting, in order not to waste time, I had gone ahead on a voyage of discovery, and I had advanced for nearly a quarter of a league [about half an English mile] astride, as if on horseback, along a ridge that joins the Dôme du Goûter to the summit of Mont Blanc. I found that it was like walking on a tight-rope. But that did not matter to me, and I think I should have succeeded in getting to

the end of it if the Pointe Rouge had not barred my way. But as I then found it was impossible to get any further I returned to the place where I had left my comrades. There I found nothing but my knapsack, for in despair of climbing Mont Blanc they had already started home saying, "Balmat is the quickest of us. He will overtake us." So I found myself alone, and for a moment I was divided between the desire to rejoin them and a wish to try the climb alone. Their action in abandoning me had angered me. Besides, something told me that this time I should succeed. So I decided on the second course. I shouldered my knapsack and I resumed my way. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon.

'I crossed the Grand Plateau and I came as far as the Brenva glacier whence I could see Courmayeur and the valley of Aosta in Piedmont. A mist was covering the summit of Mont Blanc, and so I did not attempt to climb up, less from fear of losing my way than from the certainty that the others, not being able to see me there, would refuse to believe that I had ever gone there. I profited by the remainder of the light that was left to me to look for a sleeping-place, but at the end of an hour, as I could not find one, and as I remembered my experiences of the previous night, I resolved to go back home. I started off again, but when I reached the Grand Plateau—I had not at that time, as I have since, accustomed my eyes to the use of a green veil—the snow had tired my sight so much that I could no longer distinguish anything. My eyes had become so dim that I saw great blots of blood. I sat down to try and pull myself together. I shut my eyes and let my face fall on my hands. At the end of half an hour I had recovered my sight, but the night had fallen, and there was no time to lose. So I got up and started off again. I had hardly gone two hundred feet when I discovered by feeling with my stick that the ice beneath me stopped there. I was on the brink of a great crevasse. 'You know it,' he said to Payot, speaking to my guide, 'the great crevasse where those three perished. The crevasse where they pulled up Marie Coutet.'

'What is that story?' I put in.

'I will tell you that to-morrow,' said Payot to me. 'Come along, my old friend,' he went on, addressing Balmat. 'We are listening.'

So Balmat went on again.

'Ah! I said to the crevasse, I know you! In fact we had crossed him in the morning over a bridge of ice covered with snow. I looked for that bridge, but the darkness kept always deepening, and my sight grew weaker and weaker with fatigue, so that I could not find it again. The headache of which I have spoken had returned. I felt no desire either to drink or to eat, and violent palpitations of the heart upset me internally. However, the only possible course was for me to remain near the crevasse until daylight. I placed my knapsack on the snow. I arranged my pocket-handkerchief as a veil over my face, and I prepared myself, as well as I could, to pass another night like the other. But as I was nearly two thousand feet higher the cold was much more intense.

'A fine, small, piercing snow-fall froze me to the bones. I felt a heaviness in my limbs and an irresistible desire to sleep. Thoughts sad as death kept invading my mind, and I knew quite well that this desire to sleep was a bad sign, and if I had the ill-luck to close my eyes I might never be able to open them again. From the spot where I was I perceived at ten thousand feet below the lights of Chamonix, where my comrades were either warm and quiet by their firesides or cosy in their beds. I said to myself, perhaps there is no one among them who is thinking of me, or if there is any one who thinks of Balmat, he puts the poker into the fire or pulls the blanket over his head and says, "At this very moment probably that fool of a Jacques is amusing himself by stamping his feet on the ground to keep them warm." Have courage, Balmat! It was not courage that failed me, it was strength. A man is not made of iron, and by this time I realised that I was not altogether going well. In the short intervals of silence which now and then broke the roar of the avalanches and the cracking of the glaciers I heard a dog bark at Courmayeur, although it was almost a league and a half [nearly four English miles] from the spot where I was. That noise diverted me. It was the only sound that reached me from Mother Earth. Towards midnight the wretched dog stopped his noise, and I fell back into that terrible silence.



‘It was a silence as if I was alone in a cemetery, for I do not count the crashing of the glaciers and the avalanches—that noise is the protesting voice of the mountains, and so far from reassuring a man it fills him with terror.

‘About two o’clock I saw again on the horizon that same white line of which I have spoken before. As before, the sun came quickly after, and as on the first night, Mont Blanc had put on his wig. This is what he does when he is in a bad temper, and then it is best not to meddle with him. I knew his character, so I took the warning and went back to the village, very sad, but not discouraged by these two failures, for now I was quite certain I should succeed on the third try. At the end of five hours I had returned to the village. It was now eight o’clock. All was well at home. My wife gave me something to eat. I was more sleepy than hungry. She wanted me to go to bed, but I was afraid of being annoyed by the flies. So I went and shut myself in the barn, stretched myself on the hay, and I slept for twenty-four hours without waking.

‘Three weeks passed without any improvement in the weather, and yet I was just as keen as ever to make the third attempt. Doctor Paccard wanted to accompany me in this attempt. We arranged, therefore, that we would start out together on the first fine day. At last, on the 8th August 1786, the weather appeared to me good enough to risk the expedition. I went to find Paccard, and I said to him, “Well, doctor, are you quite sure of yourself? Have you no fear of cold, or of snow, or of precipices? Tell me straight, as man to man.”

“I have fear of nothing as long as I am with you, Balmat,” said Paccard.

“Well,” said I, “the moment has come to climb the little mole hill.” The doctor told me he was quite ready, but just as he was shutting his door I think that his courage failed him a little, for the key would not come out of the keyhole. He turned it once, turned it back, and then turned it round again.

“Stop! Balmat,” he said “to be quite sure I think that we ought to take two other guides.”

“I will go alone with you,” I said, “or you will go with



the others. I wish to be the first on the mountain, not the second."

'He reflected a moment, took out his key, put it in his pocket, and followed me like a machine, with his head down. After a moment he raised his head.

"Well," he said, "I trust myself to you, Balmat."

"*En route!*" I cried, "and God helping us, we will do it."

'Then he began to sing, but not in very good tune. He was a little bit worried, was that doctor. Then I took his arm.

"This is not all," I said. "The thing is that no one should know what we are up to except our wives."

'Nevertheless a third person was brought into our confidence. It was the shopwoman in whose shop we were obliged to buy the syrup to mix with our water. The wine and the brandy was too strong for the journey. As she seemed to suspect something we told her everything, and asked her to keep an eye on the morrow at nine o'clock in the morning on the slope of the Dôme du Goûter. That was the time at which we meant to be there, if nothing happened to upset our calculations.

'We arranged all our little affairs and said good-bye to our wives. Then we set out, at about five o'clock in the evening, one of us taking the left bank and the other the right bank of the river Arve, so that no one should get wind of our project. We rejoined one another at the village of La Côte. On the same evening we slept on the summit of La Côte, between the glaciers of Boissons and that of Taconnay. I brought a rug, and I used it to wrap up the doctor as one swaddles an infant, and, thanks to this precaution, he passed a fairly good night. As for myself I slept without a break until almost half-past one o'clock. At two o'clock the white line appeared on the horizon, and soon after that the sun rose without a cloud, without any mist, most sparkling and brilliant, promising us a wonderful day. I woke the doctor and we set out on our climb. At the end of a quarter of an hour we had begun crossing the Glacier Taconnay. The first steps of the doctor on this frozen sea were just a little tottery, for he had to walk in the midst of those immense crevasses, of a depth beyond all power of human sight, on those bridges of ice which one feels cracking beneath one,

and which if they were engulfed would engulf one along with themselves in the abyss below. But little by little the doctor grew more confident as he saw me going ahead of him without any hesitation, and we got across safe and sound. We then set ourselves to climb the Grands Mulets, which we soon left behind us. I showed the doctor the place where I had passed the first night. He made a very significant grimace, and kept quite quiet for ten minutes, and then, suddenly stopping, he said, "Do you think, Balmat, that we shall reach the top of Mont Blanc to-day?" I well saw what was in his mind, and I reassured him with a laugh; but without giving him any promise. We then went steadily forward for the space of two hours. Then we reached the Plateau. The wind had now reached us and had become more and more lively—until at last, when we had got to the projection of rock which is called the Petits Mulets, a gust of wind more violent than any before suddenly carried away the hat of the doctor. Startled by his exclamation I turned round, and I saw his felt hat running away down the precipice towards Courmayeur. He watched it go, with his arms outstretched.

"Oh!" I cried, "you must put on mourning for that hat, doctor, we shall never see it again. It's gone off into Piedmont. Wish it a happy journey!"

'It seemed as if the wind had gained spirit from this jest, for scarcely had I closed my mouth when there came upon us a puff so violent that we were obliged to throw ourselves on our faces to avoid following the hat. For ten minutes we could not rise. The wind lashed the mountain, and passed whistling over our heads, carrying away whirlwinds of snow as great as a house. The doctor for a moment lost his courage. As for myself the only thought in my mind was about the shopwoman, who was due to keep her eye on the Dôme du Goûter at this hour. So at the first moment of respite that the hurricane gave us I raised myself to my feet, but the doctor would not follow me except on all fours. By this mode of progress we arrived at a point whence we could distinguish the village. Standing there, I took out my glasses, and at 12,000 feet below in the valley I distinguished our good gossip at the head of a group of about fifty people, gazing through spy-glasses to find us.

A feeling of dignity made the doctor rise to his feet, and as soon as he was standing upright we saw that they had recognised us, him in his great coat, and me in my usual mountain costume. The party in the valley signalled to us with their hats. I signalled to them with mine. That of the doctor was absent without leave.

'Paccard, however, had used up all his energy in rising to his feet, and neither the encouragement which we had received from those below, nor that which I gave him, was able to persuade him to continue the ascent. After I had exhausted all my eloquence, and when I saw that I was simply wasting my time, I told him to keep himself as warm as possible, and always to keep moving. He heard me without understanding me, and replied, "Yes! yes!" just in order to get rid of me. I saw that he must be suffering from the cold. I was myself quite benumbed. I left him the bottle and I went on ahead alone, telling him that I would come back to fetch him. "Yes! Yes!" he replied. I again told him never to stop in one place, and off I went. I had taken about thirty steps when I turned round and I saw that instead of running about and stamping his feet on the ground the doctor had sat down with his back to the wind. At any rate, that was better than nothing. From that moment onward the climb presented no particular difficulty. But in proportion as I got higher it became more and more difficult for me to breathe. At every ten feet I was obliged to stop still and take breath like a consumptive. I felt as if I had no lungs, and as if my chest was quite empty of air. Then I tied my handkerchief like a necktie and I knotted it over my mouth, breathing through it. That gave me a little relief. But the cold kept gaining on me more and more. I took an hour to progress a short quarter of a league [about half an English mile]. I moved forward with my head down. But seeing that I had reached a point which I did not know, I raised my head, and saw that I had at last reached the top of Mont Blanc.

'Then I kept turning my eyes all round me, fearful that I was deceiving myself, and trembling lest I should find some aiguille or some new point above me. For in that case I should not have had the strength to climb any more. The joints of my legs seemed to be held together only by the help of my trousers. No! There

was nothing above me. I had reached the end of my journey. I had come where nobody had ever come before, not even the eagle or the chamois. I had reached that point alone, without any help, except that of my own strength and my own will. Everything that surrounded me seemed part and parcel of myself. I was the King of Mont Blanc! I was the statue on this immense pedestal! Ah! What a sensation!

'Then I turned towards Chamonix, waving my hat at the end of my baton, and I saw with the help of my glasses that they were replying to my signals. My subjects in the valley had caught sight of me. The whole village was out on the square gazing at me.

'This first moment of exaltation over, I turned my thoughts to my poor doctor. I went back towards him, down the mountain, as quickly as I could, calling him by his name, quite frightened that I might hear no reply from him. At the end of a quarter of an hour I saw him in the distance bundled up like a ball, but motionless in spite of my cries, which certainly must have reached him. I found him with his head between his knees and curled up like a cat asleep. I struck him on the shoulder, and he raised his head mechanically. I told him that I had reached the top of Mont Blanc, but that seemed to interest him very little, for the only reply he made was to ask where he could lie down and go to sleep. I told him that he had come to mount the highest mountain in Europe, and that mount it he should. I raised him up by putting my arms beneath his armpits and made him walk a few steps. He was like a man in a stupor, and it seemed to make no difference to him whether he went up or down. But the movement I forced him to make gave some small play to the circulation of the blood. Then he asked me if by any chance I had in my pocket a pair of gloves like those I was wearing. They were gloves of hareskin which I had made on purpose for this excursion without any separation between the fingers. In the situation in which we then were I would have refused both even to my brother, but I gave him one.

'It was after six o'clock when we reached the summit of Mont Blanc, and although the sun was shining brilliantly, the sky seemed to us of a very deep blue and we actually saw some stars twinkling

in the sky. When we looked down beneath us we saw nothing but ice, snow, rocks, aiguilles, and denuded peaks. The immense chain of mountains which crosses the Dauphiné and stretches as far as the Tyrol lay before us with its four hundred glaciers sparkling in the sunlight. Looked at from this height there seemed scarcely any vegetation on the earth. The lakes of Neuchâtel and Geneva seemed to be just hardly perceptible points of blue. On our left stretched out the Switzerland of the mountains all rippling in waves, and beyond it the Switzerland of the plains which seemed like a rich green carpet. To our right was the whole of Piedmont and Lombardy as far as Genoa, and right in front of us Italy.

'Paccard saw nothing. I described it all to him. As for myself, all my troubles had gone, even all my fatigue. The difficulty of breathing which before had made me almost give up my undertaking was now scarcely noticeable. We remained thus for thirty-five minutes. It was now seven o'clock in the evening. We had only two hours and a half of daylight left to us. We must go. Again I took Paccard by the arms. Again I waved my hat to give the last signal to my friends in the valley, and then we began to go down. We had no definite track to guide us. The wind was so cold that not even the surface of the snow was thawed. The only sign of our ascent that we could find were some marks on the ice made by the points of our iron-shod sticks. Paccard had become a mere child, without energy or will. I guided him when the way was easy, and when it was difficult I carried him. Night was falling when we crossed the crevasse. At the foot of the Grand Plateau it was right on us; every moment Paccard stopped, declaring that he would not go another step, and every moment I forced him to resume his march, not by persuasion, for he could not understand a word, but by sheer force. At eleven o'clock we emerged from the region of ice and placed our feet on firm ground.

'It was now an hour since we had lost the last reflection of the sun's rays. So I allowed Paccard to stop, and I was preparing to wrap him again in my rug when I noticed that he had lost the use of his hands. I pointed this out to him. He replied that he felt better now that he could not feel them. I took off his gloves and found his hands looking white and almost dead. I too was

feeling pretty bad about the hand on which I was wearing his little leather glove in place of my big glove of hareskin. I told him that we had three frozen hands between us. He did not seem to mind a bit. All he could do was to ask me where he could sleep. As for myself he told me to rub the frost-bitten hand with snow, and certainly the medicine was not far off. I began by operating on him, and I ended with myself. Soon the blood began to return, and with the blood came heat, but along with it a pain as acute as if some one had pricked every vein in our hands with needles. I rolled my baby up in the rug and placed him to sleep in the shelter of a rock. We had a morsel of food and drank a drop. We pressed against one another as closely as we could for warmth, and then we fell asleep. On the morrow at six o'clock I was awakened by Paccard.

"It's very queer, Balmat," he said, "I can hear the birds singing and yet I cannot see the light. It is probably because I cannot open my eyes." Observe that he had them open like the statue of the Grand Duke. I replied that he was certainly wrong, and that he ought to see quite well. Then he asked me for a little snow. He placed it in the palm of his hand with some brandy and began to foment his eyelids. When he had finished that treatment he could not see any better, but his eyes smarted far worse.

"Well," he said, "it looks as if I was blind, Balmat. How am I going to get down?"

"Hold on to the strap of my knapsack and walk behind me," I said, "that will be the proper way," and it was thus that we descended and reached the village of La Côte. There, as I was afraid that my wife might be anxious, I left the doctor. He found his way back to his house by beating his stick on the ground and I got home by myself. It was not till then that I caught a sight of myself.

'I was quite unrecognisable. My eyes were red, my face was black, and my lips were blue. Every time that I laughed or gaped the blood gushed from my lips or my cheeks. Finally, I could only now see in the dark.

'Four days later I set out for Geneva in order to inform M. de Saussure that I had succeeded in climbing Mont Blanc, but he had

already learned the news from some Englishmen. Thus it was that he came to Chamonix and tried the same ascent along with me, but owing to the weather we could not climb higher than the Montagne de la Côte, and it was not until the following year that he succeeded in his great object.'

'Doctor Paccard,' I said, 'is he still blind?'

'Oh, yes! Blind? I should think so,' he cried. 'He died eleven months ago at the age of seventy-nine years, and he could still read without spectacles. His only shortcoming was that his eyes were terribly red!'

'In consequence of his climb?'

'Oh, no!'

'Then why?'

'The good fellow,' he said, 'lifted his elbow a little.' Thus speaking, Balmat emptied his third bottle.

Dumas.

*Impressions de Voyage : Suisse.*

(Copyright trans.)

[Here, at any rate, we touch absolute truth. De Saussure's simple and modest account of his actual climb of Mont Blanc, written shortly after the event and published separately, takes a high place in Alpine literature.]

VARIOUS periodicals have informed the public, that in the month of August last year (1786), two inhabitants of Chamouni, M. Paccard and the guide Jacques Balmat, reached the summit of Mont Blanc, regarded up to that time as inaccessible. (3.) De Saussure's Ascent

I learnt the news on the morrow of the ascent, and started off instantly to try and follow in their tracks. But so much rain and snow came on that I was compelled to give up my plan for that season. I gave Jacques Balmat a special commission to visit the mountain at the commencement of June, and to keep me informed as to the first moment when the melting of the snows should render it accessible. In the interval I went to Provence that I might make on the seashore some experiments which might form materials for comparison with those which I proposed to make on the summit of Mont Blanc.

Jacques Balmat made two abortive attempts in the month of



June. He wrote to me, however, saying that he was quite sure that it would be possible to climb the mountain in the first days of July. On receiving that news I started for Chamouni. At Sallenche I met the brave Balmat, who had come to Geneva to inform me of his fresh victory. On the 5th July he had reached the top of the mountain with two of the other guides, Jean-Michel Cachat and Alexis Tournier. It was raining when I reached Chamouni, and the bad weather continued for nearly four weeks, but I was determined to wait right to the end of the season rather than miss the favourable moment.

It came at last—that moment so long desired, and on the 1st August I set out, accompanied by a servant and eighteen guides, who carried my instruments and all the luggage that I wanted. My eldest son very much wished to accompany me, but I feared that he was not yet sufficiently robust and sufficiently trained to expeditions of this gigantic nature. So I persuaded him to give up the idea. He remained at the Priory, where with great care and precision he made observations similar to those which I was making at the summit.

Although there are scarcely two leagues and a half [six and a quarter English miles], in a direct line from the Priory at Chamouni to the summit of Mont Blanc, this climb has always taken at least eighteen hours to accomplish, because there are many difficult bits to climb, so many windings, and about 12,000 feet to mount.

So that I might be free to choose any place I liked to pass my nights, I carried with me a tent, and on the first evening I slept in this tent at the summit of the mountain de la Côte, which is situated in the middle of the Priory, and at about 4,800 feet above that village. This day's work is quite free from difficulty and danger. You mount all the time over grass or over rock, and it is quite easy to finish this part of the ascent in five or six hours. But from that point to the summit the whole climb is over ice or snow.

The second day's work is by no means the easiest. The first task is to cross the Glacier de la Côte, in order to reach the foot of a small chain of rocks which are almost buried in the snows of Mont Blanc. This glacier is difficult and dangerous. It is broken



up by large crevasses, deep and irregular ; and often it is impossible to cross them except over bridges of snow, which are often very thin and suspended over deep abysses. One of my guides very nearly perished on one of these bridges. He had gone the previous evening with two others to reconnoitre our route. Happily, these three had taken the precaution of fastening themselves together with ropes. The snow broke under him in the middle of crossing a broad and deep crevasse, and he remained suspended between his two comrades. We passed quite close to the deep breach which had been formed by his falling body, and I trembled at seeing the danger from which he had escaped. The passage of this glacier is so difficult and tortuous that it took us three hours to go from the top of the Côte right up to the first rocks of the isolated chain, although if you took it in a direct line the route would not be more than a quarter of a league [a little over half an English mile] in extent.

After reaching these rocks you leave them, at first to take a zig-zag route up a snow-field, which goes from north to south right up to the foot of the highest peak. These snows are cut up by tremendous and superb crevasses. Their fine and clear edges give one the impression that the snow is lying in regular beds, and each of these beds seems to correspond to a year of time. However large these crevasses, one can never plumb their depths.

My guides were anxious that we should pass the night close to one of the rocks met with on this route. But as the highest were still about 4000 feet below the summit, I wished to reach a higher point before the night. For that purpose it would be necessary to camp in the middle of the snows, and it was on that point that I had a great deal of trouble in persuading my companions. They imagined that during the night there reigned over these high snows a cold of an absolutely insupportable nature, and they had a real and genuine fear that they would perish there. I brought them to a check by saying I was determined to go through, taking with me those of whom I felt absolutely sure, and leaving the rest behind. I pointed out that we should dig a deep excavation in the snow, and that we should cover that excavation with the canvas of the tent, and that we should there keep close together, and so we

should suffer the least possible effects of the cold, however keen it might be. These arrangements re-assured them, and we resumed our march.

At four o'clock in the evening we reached the second of the three great plateaus of snow which we had to traverse. It was there that we camped at 9000 feet above the Priory, and 12,500 above the sea, 600 feet higher than the top of the peak of Teneriffe. We did not go so far as the last plateau, because of the danger of avalanches. Even the first plateau on which we were going to pass the night is not entirely free from them. We had crossed two of these avalanches, fallen since the last expedition of Balmat. Their débris covered the whole breadth of the great snow valley.

My guides had set themselves to the task of excavating the spot on which we intended to pass the night; but they soon began to feel the effects of the rarity of the air. These robust men, on whom seven or eight hours of the kind of marching through which we had come had had absolutely no effect, had dug up only five or six shovelfuls of snow when they found themselves unable to go on. They were obliged to take turns in relieving one another. One of them who had gone back to fetch a barrel of water which we had seen in a crevasse, was taken ill in making that journey. He returned without the water, and passed the evening in the greatest anguish. For myself who am so accustomed to the air of mountains, and who really feel better in this air than in that of the plains, I was overcome with fatigue with the mere effort of looking at my weather instruments. This mountain trouble gave us a keen thirst, and the only way in which we could get any water was by melting the snow. For the water which we saw as we climbed up was found to be frozen when we went back for it, and the little chafing-dish that I had brought up was quite inadequate for the use of twenty persons in this physical condition.

From the middle of this plateau, shut in between the last peak of Mont Blanc to the south, with its high slopes to the east, and the Dôme du Goûter to the west, one sees scarcely anything but snow. These snows are extraordinarily pure and of a dazzling whiteness, and on the high summits they form a most singular

contrast with the almost black sky of these high regions. We did not see on these heights a single living creature or the smallest appearance of vegetation. It is the abode of cold and silence. When I brought to my mind the image of Doctor Paccard and Jacques Balmat arriving at the end of the day, first comers into these deserts, without shelter, without help, without even being sure that human beings could live in the places to which they were trying to penetrate, and yet always fearlessly going on, I was full of admiration for their energy, and spirit, and their high courage.

My guides, always preoccupied with the fear of cold, closed all the folds of the tent so firmly that I suffered very much from heat, and from the air polluted by our breathing. I was obliged to go out into the night in order to breathe. The moon shone with splendour in the middle of a sky of the blackness of ebony. Jupiter arose all radiant with light from behind the highest peak to the east on Mont Blanc, and his light, thrown back everywhere from the snow of this great basin, was so dazzling that I could not distinguish between the stars of the first and second order. At last we fell into slumber, but we were awakened by the sound of a great avalanche which covered a part of the slope up which we should have to climb on the morrow. At the break of day the thermometer was three degrees below freezing-point.

We started late because it was necessary to melt the snow for our breakfasts and for our journey. It was drunk as soon as it was melted, and the guides who kept guarding religiously the wine I had brought with me kept also depriving me continually of the water I kept in reserve.

We began by climbing to the third and last plateau ; then we went off to the left in order to reach the highest rocks to the left of the summit. The slope is extremely steep, sometimes amounting to thirty-nine degrees ; at all places the route borders on precipices, and the surface of the snow was so hard that those who went in front could not make sure of their steps without cutting them with an axe. We took two hours to climb this slope, which is about 1600 feet high. Arrived at the last rock we moved again to the right towards the west in order to cross the last snowfield, which is about 450 feet in height. This snowfield has only an

inclination of from twenty-eight to twenty-nine degrees, and presents no danger; but the air is so rarefied that all one's strength is used up very quickly. Near the summit I could take no more than fifteen or sixteen steps without stopping to take breath. Every now and again I felt a weakness coming over me which compelled me to sit down, but as soon as my breathing returned I felt all my forces coming back, and when I resumed my search it seemed to me that I could reach the top of the mountain in one effort. All my guides, in proportion to their physical strength, were in the same condition. We took two hours from the last rock up to the summit, and it was eleven o'clock when we arrived there.

The first thing I did was to turn my gaze to Chamouni, where I knew that my wife and her two sisters were gazing at us through a telescope, following all my steps with anxiety, doubtless excessive but none the less cruel, and I experienced a very pleasant and consoling feeling when I saw floating in the wind the flag they promised to raise the moment they saw I had reached the summit, when all their fears would be at an end. Then I could enjoy without any feeling of disquietude the great spectacle that lay stretched out beneath our eyes. A light vapour which hung over the lowest valleys hid from me the exact details of the objects very low down and very far away, such as the plains of France and of Lombardy. But I did not trouble very much about that loss. For what I really saw, and saw with the greatest clearness, was the whole grouping of all those high summits whose organisation and anatomy I had so long desired to know. I scarcely believed my eyes. It seemed to me that it was a dream when I saw beneath my feet those majestic peaks, those famous Aiguilles, Le Midi, l'Argentière, Le Géant, whose very bases had been so difficult and so dangerous for me to reach.

I grasped their relationships, their connection, their structure, and one single glance removed all the doubts which years of work had not been able to clear.

Meanwhile my guides were putting up my tent, and were erecting the little table on which I wanted to make the experiment of boiling water. But when I wanted to put out my instruments in order to observe them, I found myself at every moment obliged

to break off my work in order to recover my breath. When you remember that the barometer up there was only 16 inches and one line (equal to about 435 millimetres), and that thus the air has only half the density of the ordinary atmosphere, it will be understood how necessary it was to supplement the density by the increased frequency of one's respirations. Now this frequency would tend to accelerate the movement of the blood. Thus we all really had a touch of fever, as my readers will be able to perceive when I give them the details of my observations.

When I was able to keep quite still, all I experienced was a touch of discomfort and a slight disposition to palpitation of the heart. But when I made any effort or when I fixed my attention on any object for some moments at a time, and above all when I leaned down I found it necessary to rise and recover my breath for some two or three minutes. My guides experienced similar sensations. They had no appetite, and indeed our food, which had become quite frozen during our climb was not exactly calculated to excite an appetite. But they did not even care for wine and brandy. Indeed they had discovered that strong liquors only increased their feeling of discomfort, in consequence, no doubt, of their increasing the rapidity of the circulation. The only thing that gave them any benefit or pleasure was fresh water, and they took a good deal of time and trouble in lighting fires without which we could not get any fresh water at all.

I remained on the summit until half-past three o'clock, and though I had not wasted a single moment, I found myself unable in those four and a half hours to make all the experiments which I had frequently carried out in less than three hours on the seashore. Nevertheless I carried out with great care those which were really essential.

I came down the mountain much more easily than I had expected. Since the movement of descending does not compress the diaphragm, it does not interfere with the respiration, and one is not therefore obliged to stop to recover breath. Nevertheless the descent of the rocks to the first plateau was very trying owing to their steepness, and the sun shone so brilliantly on the precipices beneath our feet that it required a very good head not to be

upset by looking at them. We slept once more on the snow, about 700 feet lower than on the preceding night. It was there that I finally convinced myself that it was the rarity of the air which had caused us so much discomfort on the summit. For if it had been fatigue we should have been much worse after this long and difficult descent; while on the contrary we had a very good appetite for our supper, and I made my observations without any feelings of malaise. At the same time I think that the height at which this physical disturbance comes on is quite different for every individual. Personally I am perfectly well up to 12,000 feet above the sea, but I always commence being upset when I get any higher. On the morrow we found the glacier de la Côte changed by the heat of these two days, and far more difficult to cross than it was when we were going up. We were obliged to descend by a steep snow slope inclined to 50 degrees in order to avoid the crevasses which had opened since our previous crossing. At last, at half-past nine o'clock we reached the mountain de la Côte, very happy to find ourselves again on firm land which we did not fear to see gaping open beneath our feet.

I met there M. Bourrit who wished to engage some of my guides on the spot to go back up the mountain with him, but they were far too fatigued and wished to go back to Chamouni to sleep. We then went on all together, descending quite gaily to the Priory, where we arrived for dinner. I was very delighted to be able to bring back my party safe and sound, with their eyes and faces in the very best possible state. The black veils with which I had provided myself, and which we had placed over our faces, quite preserved our skins, while our predecessors had returned almost blind, and with faces burnt and cracked even till they were bleeding, by the refraction from the snows.

De Saussure.  
*Voyages dans les Alpes.*  
 (Copyright trans.).

#### ALBERT SMITH

[Albert Smith was a great London character in the forties and fifties. He was a sort of literary showman and public entertainer, with a touch of the dandy thrown in. It struck him that a climb

of Mont Blanc might make a great show. He achieved it in 1851 and for years he lectured on that climb to great audiences. These passages are from the excellent little volume which he wrote about it, *The Story of Mont Blanc*, 1853. I have printed it practically as it was published, correcting only the most glaring errors.]

WE met at seven o'clock on the morning of Tuesday the 12th, to breakfast. All our guides and porters had a feast in the garden and were in high spirits—for the glass had gone up half an inch, and not a cloud was to be seen in the sky. Nothing could exceed the bustle of the inn-yard; everybody had collected to see the start; the men were dividing and portioning the fowls, and bottles of wine, and rugs, and wrappers; something was constantly being forgotten, and nobody could find whatever was of the most importance to them; and the good-tempered cook—another Tairraz—kept coming forth from the kitchen with so many additional viands that I began to wonder when our stores would be completed. The list of articles of food which we took up was as follows:—

Albert  
Smith's  
Ascent  
The great  
Cockney  
Climb

*Provisions for the Ascent of Mont Blanc.*

Hôtel de Londres,  
Chamouni.  
August 12th, 1851.  
Francs

60 bottles of Vin Ordinaire . . .	60
6 do. Bordeaux . . .	36
10 do. St. George . . .	30
15 do. St. Jean . . .	30
3 do. Cognac . . .	15
1 do. syrup of Raspberries . . .	3
2 do. lemonade . . .	6
2 do. champagne . . .	14
20 loaves . . .	30
10 small cheeses . . .	8
6 packets of chocolate . . .	9
6 do. sugar . . .	6
4 do. prunes . . .	6
4 do. raisins . . .	6
2 do. salt . . .	1



4 wax candles	.	.	.	.	4
6 lemons	.	.	.	.	1
4 legs of mutton	.	.	.	.	24
4 shoulders do.	.	.	.	.	12
6 pieces of veal	.	.	.	.	30
1 piece of beef	.	.	.	.	5
11 large fowls	.	.	.	.	30
35 small do.	.	.	.	.	87
Total,					<u>456</u>

About half-past seven we started; and as we left the inn, and traversed the narrow ill-paved streets of Chamouni towards the bridge, I believe we formed the largest caravan that had ever gone off together. Each of us had four guides, making twenty in all; and the porters and volunteers I may reckon at another score; besides which there was a rabble rout of friends, and relations, and sweethearts, and boys, some of whom came a considerable distance with us. I had a mule waiting for me at the bridle-road that runs through the fields towards the dirty little village of Les Pèlerins—for I wished to keep myself as fresh as I could for the real work. I do not think I gained anything by this, for the brute was exceedingly troublesome to manage up the rude steep path and amongst the trees. I expect my active young companions had the best of it on their own good legs. Dressed, at present, in light boating attire, they were types of fellows in first-rate fibrous muscular condition; and their sunny good-temper, never once clouded during the journey, made everything bright and cheering.

[After describing the early and more commonplace points of the ascent, Mr Albert Smith goes on:—]

The sun at length went down behind the Aiguille du Goûté, and then, for two hours, a scene of such wild and wondrous beauty—of such inconceivable and unearthly splendour—burst upon me, that, spell-bound, and almost trembling with the emotion its magnificence called forth—with every sense, and feeling, and thought absorbed by its brilliancy, I saw far more than the realisation of the most gorgeous visions that opium or *hasheesh* could evoke,



accomplished. At first, everything about us, above, around, below—the sky, the mountain, and the lower peaks—appeared one uniform creation of burnished gold, so brightly dazzling, that, now our veils were removed, the eye could scarcely bear the splendour. As the twilight gradually crept over the lower world, the glow became still more vivid; and presently, as the blue mists rose in the valleys, the tops of the higher mountains looked like islands rising from a filmy ocean—an archipelago of gold. By degrees this metallic lustre was softened into tints—first orange, and then bright, transparent crimson, along the horizon, rising through the different hues with prismatic regularity, until, immediately above us, the sky was a deep, pure blue, merging towards the east into glowing violet. The snow took its colour from these changes; and every portion on which the light fell was soon tinged with pale carmine, of a shade similar to that which snow at times assumes, from some imperfectly explained cause, at high elevations—such, indeed, as I had seen, in early summer, upon the Furka and Faulhorn. These beautiful hues grew brighter as the twilight below increased in depth; and it now came marching up the valley of the glaciers, until it reached our resting-place. Higher and higher still it drove the lovely glory of the sunlight before it, until at last the vast Dôme du Goûté and the summit itself stood out, icelike and grim, in the cold evening air, although the horizon still gleamed with a belt of rosy light.

Although this superb spectacle had faded away, the scene was still even more than striking. The fire which the guides had made, and which was now burning and crackling on a ledge of rock a little below us, threw its flickering light, with admirable effect, upon our band. The men had collected round the blaze, and were making some chocolate, as they sang *patois* ballads and choruses; they were all evidently as completely at home as they would have been in their own *chalets*. We had arranged ourselves as conveniently as we could, so as not to inconvenience one another, and had still nothing more than an ordinary wrapper over us: there had been no attempt to build the tent with bâtons and canvas, as I had read in some of the Mont Blanc narratives—the starry heaven was our only roofing. Mr. Floyd and Mr. Philips

were already fast asleep. Mr. West was still awake, and I was too excited even to close my eyes in the attempt to get a little repose. We talked for a while, and then he also was silent.

The stars had come out, and looking over the plateau, I soon saw the moonlight lying cold and silvery on the summit, stealing slowly down the very track by which the sunset glories had passed away. But it came so tardily, that I knew it would be hours before we derived any actual benefit from the light. One after another the guides fell asleep, until only three or four remained round the embers of the fire, thoughtfully smoking their pipes. And then silence, impressive beyond expression, reigned over our isolated world. Often and often, from Chamouni, I had looked up at evening towards the darkening position of the Grands Mulets, and thought, almost with shuddering, how awful it must be for men to pass the night in such a remote, eternal and frozen wilderness. And now I was lying there—in the very heart of its icebound and appalling solitude. In such close communion with nature in her grandest aspect, with no trace of the actual living world beyond the mere speck that our little party formed, the mind was carried far away from its ordinary trains of thought—a solemn emotion of mingled awe and delight, and yet self-perception of abject nothingness alone rose above every other feeling. A vast untrodden region of cold, and silence, and death, stretched out far and away from us on every side; but above, Heaven, with its countless watchful eyes, was over all!’

[So far for the first day. Now for the second:—]

The Night  
March on the  
Grand  
Plateau

It was twenty minutes to twelve when the note of preparation for our second start was sounded. Tairraz shook up the more drowsy of the guides, and they were soon bustling about, and making their arrangements for the work before us. They had not much to carry now. Everything, with the exception of a few bottles of wine, some small loaves, and two or three cold fowls, was to be left on the Grands Mulets: there was no danger of theft from passers-by, as Carrier observed. This quarter of an hour before midnight was, I think, the heaviest during the journey.

Now that we were going to leave our lodging, I did feel uncommonly tired ; and wild and ragged as it was, I began to think the blankets and wrappers looked very comfortable in the ruddy fire-light, compared to the glooming desert of ice before us. The moon was still low, that is to say, the light on the mountain had not come farther down than the top of the Aiguille du Goûté, so that we were in comparative darkness. Three or four lanterns were fitted up with candles ; and Jean Tairraz had a fine affair like a Chinese balloon, or more truly, the round *lampions* used in French illuminations, only larger : and this he tied behind him, to light me as I followed. Michel Devouassoud took the lead ; we came after him with regular numbers of guides, each traveller having a lantern carried before him, and then another guide or two, lightly laden. In this order, in single file, we left the Grands Mulets—not by the scrambling route of our arrival, but by the upper portion of the rocks, where we descended at once, in a few feet, to the snow. As we passed the Upper Mulets, we heard our Irish follower ‘keeping it up’ by himself in most convivial fashion, and singing ‘God save the Queen’ to his guide. Soon afterwards we saw his lantern glimmering on our traces ; and the light of the second aspirant was also visible, moving about before his start.

The snowy side of Mont Blanc, between the Grands Mulets and the Rochers Rouges near the summit, is formed by three gigantic steps, if they may be so called, one above the other, each of which is many hundred feet high. Between each is a comparatively level platform of glacier ; and the topmost of these, which is two or three miles across, is called the Grand Plateau. Its position can be made out very well from Chamouni with the naked eye. Up these slopes our road now lay ; and for more than two hours we followed one another in silence—now trudging over the level places, and now slowly climbing, in zig-zag up the steep. Very little talking went on, for we knew that we should soon need all our breath. The walking here, however, was by no means difficult ; for the snow was hard and crisp, and we made very good progress, although for a long time we saw the red speck of fire, far below us, gleaming on the Grands Mulets. The stars were out, and the air was sharp and cold, but only disagreeably biting when the lightest puff of wind came. This was

not very often, for we were sheltered on all sides by the heights and aiguilles around us.

The march from the Mulets to the foot of the Grand Plateau was the most unexciting part of the journey. It was one continuous, steadily ascending tramp of three hours and a half—now and then retracing our footmarks with a little grumbling, when it was found, on gaining the neck of a ridge of snow, that there was an impracticable crevice on the other side; but the general work was not much more than that of ascending the Mer de Glace, on the route to the Jardin. Whenever we came to a standstill, our feet directly got very cold; and the remedy for this was, to drive them well into the snow. The guides were anxious that we should constantly keep in motion; and, indeed, they were never still themselves during these halts.

We had nearly gained the edge of the Grand Plateau when our caravan was suddenly brought to a stop by the announcement from our leading guide of a huge crevice ahead, to which he could not see any termination; and it was far too wide to cross by any means. It appeared that the guides had looked forward all along to some difficulty here—and they were now really anxious: for Tairraz said, that if we could not reach the other side our game was up, and we must return. Auguste Devouassoud went ahead and called for a lantern. We had now only one left alight; two had burnt out, and the other had been lost, shooting away like a meteor down the glacier until it disappeared in a gulf. The remaining light was handed forward, and we watched its course with extreme anxiety, hovering along the edge of the abyss—anon disappearing and then showing again farther off—until at last Auguste shouted out that he had found a pass, and that we could proceed again. We toiled up a very steep cliff of ice, and then edged the crevice which yawned upon our left in a frightful manner—more terrible in its semi-obscurity than it is possible to convey an impression of—until the danger was over, and we all stood safely upon the Grand Plateau about half-past three in the morning.

We had now two or three miles of level walking before us; indeed our road, from one end of the plateau to the other, was on a slight descent. Before we started we took some wine; our appetites were not very remarkable, in spite of all our work; but a

leathern cup of St. George put a little life and warmth into us, for we were chilled with the delay, and it was now intensely cold. We also saw the other lanterns approaching, and we now formed, as it were, one long caravan. Still in single file we set off again, and the effect of our silent march was now unearthly and solemn, to a degree that was almost painfully impressive. Mere atoms in this wilderness of perpetual frost, we were slowly advancing over the vast plain—slowly following each other on the track which the leading glimmering of light aided the guide to select. The reflected moonlight from the Dôme du Goûté, which looked like a huge mountain of frosted silver, threw a cold gleam over the plateau, sufficient to show its immense and ghastly space. High up on our right was the summit of Mont Blanc, apparently as close and as inaccessible as ever; and immediately on our left was the appalling gulf, yawning in the ice of unknown depth, into which the avalanche swept Dr. Hamel's guides; and in whose depths, ice-bound and unchanged, they are yet locked. Tairraz crept close to me, and said, through his teeth, almost in a whisper—'C'est ici, monsieur, que mon frère Auguste est péri en 1820, avec Balmat et Carrier; les pauvres corps sont encore là-bas!—ça me donne de peine, toujours, en traversant le Plateau; et la route est encore périlleuse.' 'Et les avalanches?' I asked, 'tombent-elles toujours?' "Oui, monsieur, toujours, nuit et jour. Le plutôt passe, mieux pour nous!"

In fact, although physically the easiest, this was the most treacherous part of the entire ascent. A flake of snow or a chip of ice, whirled by the wind from the summit, and increasing as it rolled down the top of the mountain, might at length thunder on to our path, and sweep everything before it into the crevice. Everybody was aware of this: and for three-quarters of an hour we kept trudging hurriedly forward, scarcely daring to speak, and every now and then looking up with mistrust at the *calotte*, as the summit is termed, that rose above us in such cold and deceitful tranquillity. Once or twice in my life I have been placed in circumstances of the greatest peril, and I now experienced the same dead calm in which my feelings always were sunk on these occasions. I knew that every step we took was gained from the

chance of a horrible death ; and yet the only thing that actually distressed me was, that the two front lanterns would not keep the same distance from one another—a matter of the most utter unimportance to everybody.

At last we got under the shelter of the Rochers Rouges, and then we were in comparative safety ; since, were an avalanche to fall, they would turn its course on to the plateau we had just quitted. A small council was assembled there. The Irishman, who had got a little ahead of us, was compelled to give in—he was done up and could go no farther. Indeed, it would have been madness to have attempted it, for we found him lying on the snow, vomiting frightfully, with considerable hæmorrhage from the nose. I think this must have been about the same elevation at which young Mr. Talfourd was compelled to give in, in 1843. I told our poor companion that he must not think the worse of us for leaving him there, with his guide, as, unfortunately, we could do nothing for him ; but I recommended him to go back as speedily as he could to the Grands Mulets, where he would find everything that he might require. He took this advice, and indeed, we found him still at the rock on our return.

As we reached the almost perpendicular wall of ice below the Rochers Rouges, we came into the full moonlight ; and, at the same time, far away on the horizon, the red glow of daybreak was gradually tinging the sky, and bringing the higher and more distant mountains into relief. The union of these two effects of light was very strange. At first, simply cold and bewildering, it had nothing of the sunset glories of the Grands Mulets ; but after a time, when peak after peak rose out from the gloomy world below, the spectacle was magnificent. In the dark, boundless space a small speck of light would suddenly appear, growing larger and larger, until it took the palpable form of a mountain top. Whilst this was going on, other points would brighten, here and there, and increase in the same manner ; then a silvery gleam would mark the position of a lake, reflecting the sky—it was that of Geneva—until the grey, hazy ocean lighted up into hills, and valleys, and irregularities, and the entire world below warmed into the glow of sunrise. We were yet in gloom, shadowed by the Aiguille Sans



Nom, with the summit of Mont Blanc shut out from us by the Rochers Rouges ; but, of course, it must have been the earliest to catch the rays.

It was now fearfully cold ; and every now and then a sharp north-east wind nearly cut us into pieces, bringing with it a storm of spiculæ of ice, which were really very painful, as they blew against and passed our faces and ears ; so we took to our veils again, which all night long had been twisted round our hats. I felt very chilled and dispirited. I had now passed two nights without sleep ; and I had really eaten nothing since the yesterday's morning but part of an egg, a piece of fowl, and a little bit of bread—for my illness had taken away all my appetite ; and on this small diet I had been undergoing the greatest work. But none of us were complaining of nausea, or difficulty of breathing, or blood to the head, or any of the other symptoms which appear to have attacked most persons even on the Grand Plateau ; so I plucked up fresh courage, and prepared for our next achievement.

This was no light affair. From the foot of the Rochers Rouges there runs a huge and slanting buttress of ice, round which we had to climb from the north-east to the east. Its surface was at an angle of about sixty degrees. Above us, it terminated in a mighty cliff, entirely covered with icicles of marvellous length and beauty ; below, it was impossible to see where it went, for it finished suddenly in an edge, which was believed to be the border of a great crevice. Along this we now had to go ; and the journey was as hazardous a one as a man might make along a barn top with frozen snow on it. Jean Carrier went first, with his axe, and very cautiously cut every step in which we were to place our feet in the ice. It is difficult at times to walk along ice on a level ; but when that ice is tilted up more than halfway towards the perpendicular, with a fathomless termination below, and no more foot-and hand-hold afforded than can be chipped out, it becomes a nervous affair enough. The cords came into requisition again : and we went along, leaning very much over to our right, and, I must say, paying little attention to our guides, who were continually pointing out spots for us to admire—the Jardin, Monte Rosa, and the Col du Géant—as they became visible. It took us nearly half-an-hour

to creep round this hazardous slope, and then we came once more upon a vast undulating field of ice, looking straight down the Glacier du Tacul, towards the upper part of the Mer de Glace—the reverse of the view the visitor enjoys from the Jardin.

My eyelids had felt very heavy for the last hour; and, but for the absolute mortal necessity of keeping them widely open, I believe would have closed before this: but now such a strange and irrepressible desire to go to sleep seized hold of me that I almost fell fast off as I sat down for a few minutes on the snow to tie my shoes. But the foremost guides were on the march again, and I was compelled to go on with the caravan. From this point on to the summit, for a space of two hours, I was in such a strange state of mingled unconsciousness and acute observation—of combined sleeping and waking—that the old-fashioned word ‘bewitched’ is the only one that I can apply to the complete confusion and upsetting of sense in which I found myself plunged. With the perfect knowledge of where I was, and what I was about—even with such caution as was required to place my feet on particular places in the snow—I conjured up such a set of absurd and improbable phantoms about me, that the most spirit-ridden intruder upon a May-day festival on the Hartz Mountains was never more beleaguered. I am not sufficiently versed in the finer theories of the psychology of sleep to know if such a state might be; but I believe for the greater part of this bewildering period I was fast asleep with my eyes open, and through them the wandering brain received external impressions; in the same manner as, upon awaking, the phantasms of our dreams are sometimes carried on, and connected with objects about the chamber. It is very difficult to explain the odd state in which I was, so to speak, entangled. A great many people I knew in London were accompanying me, and calling after me, as the stones did after Prince Pervis, in the *Arabian Nights*. Then there was some terribly elaborate affair that I could not settle, about two bedsteads, the whole blame of which transaction, whatever it was, lay on my shoulders; and then a literary friend came up, and told me he was sorry we could not pass over his ground on our way to the summit, but that the King of Prussia had forbidden it. Everything was as foolish and



unconnected as this, but it worried me painfully ; and my senses were under such little control, and I reeled and staggered about so, that when we had crossed the snow prairie, and arrived at the foot of an almost perpendicular wall of ice, four or five hundred feet high—the terrible Mur de la Côte—up which we had to climb, I sat down again on the snow, and told Tairraz that I would not go any farther, but that they might leave me there if they pleased.

The Mont Blanc guides are used to these little varieties of temper above the Grand Plateau. In spite of my mad determination to go to sleep, Balmat and another set me up on my legs again, and told me that if I did not exercise every caution, we should all be lost together, for the most really dangerous part of the whole ascent had arrived. I had the greatest difficulty in getting my wandering wits into order ; but the risk called for the strongest mental effort ; and, with just sense enough to see that our success in scaling this awful precipice was entirely dependent upon 'pluck' I got ready for the climb. I have said the Mur de la Côte is some hundred feet high, and is an all but perpendicular iceberg. At one point you can reach it from the snow, but immediately after you begin to ascend it, obliquely, there is nothing below but a chasm in the ice more frightful than anything yet passed. Should the foot slip, or the baton give way, there is no chance for life—you would glide like lightning from one frozen crag to another, and finally be dashed to pieces, hundreds and hundreds of feet below in the horrible depths of the glacier. Were it in the valley, simply rising up from a glacier *moraine*, its ascent would require great nerve and caution ; but here, placed 14,000 feet above the level of the sea, terminating in an icy abyss, so deep that the bottom is lost in obscurity ; exposed, in a highly rarefied atmosphere, to a wind cold and violent beyond all conception ; assailed with muscular powers already taxed far beyond their strength, and nerves shaken by constantly increasing excitement and want of rest—with bloodshot eyes and raging thirst, and a pulse leaping rather than beating—with all this it may be imagined that the frightful Mur de la Côte calls for more than ordinary determination to mount it.

Of course every footstep had to be cut with the adzes ; and my

blood ran colder still as I saw the first guides creeping like flies upon its smooth glistening surface. The two Tairraz were in front of me, with the fore part of the rope, and François Favret, I think, behind. I scarcely know what our relative positions were, for we had not spoken much to one another for the last hour; every word was an exertion, and our attention was solely confined to our own progress. In spite of all my exertions, my confusion of ideas and drowsiness increased to such a painful degree, that, clinging to the hand-holes made in the ice, and surrounded by all this horror, I do believe, if we had halted on our climb for half a minute, I should have gone off to sleep. But there was no pause. We kept progressing, very slowly indeed, but still going on,—and up so steep a path, that I had to wait until the guide before me removed his foot before I could put my hand into the notch. I looked down below two or three times, but was not at all giddy, although the depth lost itself in the blue haze.

For upwards of half an hour we kept on slowly mounting this iceberg, until we reached the foot of the last ascent—the *calotte* as it is called—the ‘cap’ of Mont Blanc. The danger was now over but not the labour, for this dome of ice was difficult to mount. The axe again was in requisition; and everybody was so ‘blown’ in common parlance, that we had to stop every three or four minutes. My young companions kept bravely on, like fine fellows as they were, getting ahead even of some of the guides; but I was perfectly done up. Honest Tairraz had no sinecure to pull me after him, for I was stumbling about as though completely intoxicated. I could not keep my eyes open, and planted my feet anywhere but in the right place. I know I was exceedingly cross. I have even a recollection of having scolded my ‘team’ because they did not go quicker; and I was excessively indignant when one of them dared to call my attention to Monte Rosa. At last, one or two went in front, and thus somewhat quickened our progress. Gradually our speed increased, until I was scrambling almost on my hands and knees; and then, as I found myself on a level, it suddenly stopped. I looked round, and saw there was nothing higher. The batons were stuck in the snow, and the guides were grouped about, some lying down, and others standing in little parties. I was on the top of Mont Blanc!

The ardent wish of years was gratified ; but I was so completely exhausted, that, without looking round me, I fell down upon the snow, and was asleep in an instant. I never knew the charm before of that mysterious and brief repose, which ancient people term 'forty winks.' Six or seven minutes of dead slumber was enough to restore the balance of my ideas : and when Tairraz awoke me I was once more perfectly myself. It was a little time before I could look at anything steadily. I wanted the whole panorama condensed into one point : for, gazing at Geneva and the Jura, I thought of the plains of Lombardy behind me ; and turning round towards them, my eye immediately wandered away to the Oberland, with its hundred peaks glittering in the bright morning sun. There was too much to see, and yet not enough : I mean, the view was so vast, that, whilst every point and valley was a matter of interest, and eagerly scanned, yet the elevation was so great that all detail was lost. What I did observe I will endeavour to render account of—not as a tourist might do, who, planting himself in imagination on the Mont Blanc of Keller's map or Mr. Auldjo's plan, puts down all the points that he considers might be visible, but just as they struck me with an average traveller's notion of Switzerland. In the first place it must be understood, as I have just intimated, that the height greatly takes away from the interest of the view, which its expanse scarcely makes amends for. As a splendid panorama, the sight from the Rigi Kulm is more attractive. The chequered fields, the little steamer plying from Lucerne to Flüelen, the tiny omnibuses on the lake-side road to Art, the desolation of Goldau, and the section of the fatal Rossberg, are all subjects of interest and much admiration. But the Rigi is 6000 feet above the sea level, and Mont Blanc is over 15,000 feet. The little clustered village, seen from the Kulm, became a mere white speck from the crown of the monarch.

The morning was most lovely ; there was not even a wreath of mist coming up from the valley. One of our guides had been up nine times, and he said he had never seen such weather. But with this extreme clearness of atmosphere there was a filmy look about the peaks, merging into a perfect haze of distance in the valleys. All the great points in the neighbourhood of Chamouni—the Buet,

the Aiguille Verte, the Col du Bonhomme, and even the Bernese Alps—were standing forth clear enough; but the other second-class mountains were mere ridges. It was some time before I could find out the Brevent at all, and many of the Aiguilles were sunk and merged into the landscape. There was a strange feeling in looking down upon the summits of these mountains, which I had been accustomed to know only as so many giants of the horizon. The other hills had sunk into perfect insignificance, or rather looked pretty much the same as they do in the relief models at the map shops. The entire length of the Lake of Geneva, with the Jura beyond, was very clearly defined; and beyond these again were the faint blue hills of Burgundy. Turning round to the south-east, I looked down on the Jardin, along the same glacier by which the visitor to the Couvercle lets his eye travel to the summit of Mont Blanc. Right away over the Col du Géant we saw the plains of Lombardy very clearly, and one of the guides insisted upon pointing out Milan; but I could not acknowledge it. I was altogether more interested in finding out the peaks and gorges comparatively near the mountain than straining my eyes after remote matters of doubt. Of the entire *coup d'œil* no descriptive power can convey the slightest notion. Both Mont Blanc and the Pyramids, viewed from below, have never been clearly pictured, from the utter absence of anything by which proportion could be fixed. From the same cause, it is next to impossible to describe the apparently boundless undulating expanse of jagged snow-topped peaks, that stretched away as far as the horizon on all sides beneath us. Where everything is so almost incomprehensible in its magnitude, no sufficiently graphic comparison can be instituted.

The first curiosity satisfied, we produced our stores, and collected together on the hard snow to discuss them. We had some wine, and a cold fowl or two, a small quantity of bread and cheese, some chocolate in batons, and a bag of prunes, which latter proved of great service in the ascent. One of these, rolled about in the mouth without being eaten, served to dispel the dryness of the throat and palate, otherwise so distressing.

The rarefaction of the air was as nothing to what I had anticipated. We had heard legends, down at Chamouni, of the impossi-

bility of lighting pipes at this height ; but now all the guides were smoking most comfortably. Our faces had an odd dark appearance, the result of congestion, and almost approaching the tint I had noticed in persons attacked by Asiatic cholera ; but this was not accompanied by any sensation of fulness, or even inconvenience. The only thing that distressed me was the entire loss of feeling in my right hand, on which I had not been able to wear one of the fur gloves, from the bad grasp it allowed to my pole. Accordingly, it was frost-bitten. The guides evidently looked upon this as a more serious matter than I did myself, and for five minutes I underwent a series of rather severe operations of very violent friction. After a while the numbness partially went away ; but even as I now write, my little finger is without sensation, and on the approach of cold it becomes very painful. However, all this was nothing ; we had succeeded and were sitting all together, without hurt or harm, on the summit of Mont Blanc. We did not feel much inclined to eat, but our *vin ordinaire* was perfect nectar ; and the bottle of champagne brought up on purpose to be drunk on the summit was considered a finer wine than had ever been met with. We all shook each other by the hand, and laughed at such small pleasantries so heartily, that it was quite diverting ; and a rapid programme of toasts went round, of which the most warmly drunk was 'Her,' according to each of our separate opinions on that point. We made no 'scientific observations,' the acute and honest De Saussure had done everything that was wanted by the world of that kind ; and those who have since worried themselves during the ascent about 'elevations' and temperatures, have added nothing to what he told us sixty years ago. But we had beheld all the wonders and horrors of the glacier world in their wildest features ; we had gazed on scenery of such fantastic yet magnificent nature as we might not hope to see again : we had laboured with all the nerve and energy we could command, to achieve a work of downright unceasing danger and difficulty, which not more than one-half of those who try are able to accomplish, and the triumph of which is, even now, shared but by a comparative handful of travellers—and we had succeeded !

Albert Smith.

*The Story of Mont Blanc* (1853).

[I give this as a specimen of the descriptions of the earlier Alpine Club climbs. It is written by Mr. Edward North Buxton, and includes an account of frost-bite. Nowadays he would have worn two stockings, and saved himself from frost-bite.]

**A Case of  
Frost-bite**

WE all had a great wish to see the view, so rarely obtained, of the Italian plains from Monte Rosa, and as the next day promised to be magnificent, and the view from the Höchste Spitze would be more uninterrupted than that from the Nord End, and as we were sure of getting to the top of the former, while the latter was doubtful—we determined to devote the next day to the beaten track. We started soon after midnight, in order to reach the top before the morning heat covered Italy with its accustomed haze; we got what we wanted, but we paid dearly for it. It was an intensely cold night, and our stock of heat was hardly sufficient to last out till the sun came to give us a fresh supply: we dared not stop for breakfast, which would no doubt have helped to keep out the cold, but were obliged to fight against it as best we might. Several times I caught myself falling asleep, and stumbling backwards on the steeper parts of the slopes; our boots were frozen literally as hard as bricks, and before we reached the saddle, two of our three guides were frost-bitten: we managed to recover them, however, in the usual way; and as we were now in bright sunshine, we kept on to the top without further inconvenience. Once there, I sat down on a rock that had been well warmed by the sun. The position was so comfortable that I stayed in it for nearly two hours, not thinking of my feet, one of which rested against a heap of melting snow. The consequence was severe frost-bite, and when I got up I found my foot entirely numb, though I had not felt any sensation of cold the whole time I was sitting. I restored the circulation without much difficulty, but the evil had taken deeper root than I thought, and in the evening the great toe had swollen to double its natural size. Cowell and my brother spent the next day in sauntering about the Gorner Grat, while I hobbled down to Zermatt, and turned up a dirty little old man who acted as parish doctor. He pounded some common glue, melted it, and applied it all hot to the affected part. On my return to the Riffel I repeated the remedy two or three times; but from my own experience I cannot recommend it to

others. The guides, however, all agreed that it was the best remedy. They told us of only one other equally effectual, which was to sit with the foot in a glacier pool till it was frozen again; a treatment which I recommend to the notice of homœopaths.

Edward North Buxton.  
*Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.*

[Another early description from *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, of a narrow escape from an avalanche. The Aletschhorn is a mountain above the Bel Alp, and 13,723 feet high.]

WE had accomplished in safety a distance of scarcely more than a hundred and fifty yards when, as I was looking at the Jungfrau, my attention was attracted by a sudden exclamation from Victor, who appeared to stagger, and all but lose his balance. At first, the idea of some sort of seizure or an attack of giddiness presented itself, but, without stopping to inquire, I at once turned round, drove my good eight-foot ash-pole as deeply as possible through the surface-layer of fresh snow into the firmer stratum beneath, tightened the rope to give Victor support, and shouted to Peter to do the same. All this was the work of an instant, and a glance at once showed me what had happened. Victor was safe for the moment, but a layer or '*couche*' of snow, ten inches to a foot in thickness, had given way exactly beneath his feet, and first gently, and then fleet as an arrow, went gliding down, with that unpleasant sound somewhat resembling the escape of steam, which is so trying to the nerves of the bravest man, when he knows its full and true significance. At first, a mass eighty to one hundred yards in breadth, and ten or fifteen in length, alone gave way, but the contagion spread, and ere another minute had elapsed the slopes right and left of us, for an extent of at least half a mile, were in movement, and, like a frozen Niagara, went crashing down the ice-precipices and séracs that still lay between us and the Aletsch glacier, 1800 to 2000 feet below. The spectacle was indescribably sublime, and the suspense for the moment rather awful, as we were clinging to an incline at least as steep as that on the Grindelwald side of the Strahleck—to name a familiar example—and it was questionable whether escape would be possible, if the layer of snow on the portion of the slope we had

A Narrow  
Shave



just been traversing should give way before we could retrace our steps.

Not a moment was to be lost; no word was spoken after the first exclamation, and hastily uttered 'au col! et vite!' and then in dead silence, with batons held aloft like harpoons ready to be plunged into the older and lower layers of snow, we stole quietly but rapidly up towards the now friendly looking '*corniche*' and in a few minutes stood once more in safety on the ridge, with feelings of gratitude for our great deliverance, which, though they did not find utterance in words, were, I believe, none the less sincerely felt by us all. *Il n'a manqué que peu à un grand malheur*, quietly remarked Victor, who looked exhausted, as well he might be after what he had gone through; but a *goutte* of *cognac* all round soon set us right again, and, shouting to Bennen, who was still in sight, though dwindled in size to a mere point, we were soon beside him, running down the *névé* of our old friend the Ober glacier.

Edward North Buxton.  
*Peaks, Passes and Glaciers.*



## (II) THE HEROES

TYNDALL

[AN account of a climb among the séracs of the Col du Géant in 1857.]

ACROSS this portion of the glacier we proceeded westward, proposing to attempt the ascent at the Rognon side. Our work soon commenced in earnest, and perils and difficulties thickened around us as we advanced. The confusion of ice-pinnacles, crags and chasms amid which we hewed our way was very bewildering. Plates of ice jutted out from the glacier like enormous fins, along the edges of which we had to walk; and often, while perched upon these immensities, we were flanked right and left by crevasses, the depths of which might be inferred from their impenetrable gloom. At some places forces of extreme complexity had acted on the mass; the ridges were broken into columns, and some of these were half-round, as if with a vertical motion; while the chasms were cut up into shafts which resembled gigantic honeycombs, round the edges of which we crept tortuously. Our work was very difficult, sometimes disheartening; nevertheless, our inspiration was, that what man has done man may do, and we eagerly persevered. My fellow traveller was silent for a time; the brandy had its effect upon him, and he confessed it, but I knew that contact with the cold ice would soon cause this to disappear, and I resolved that when restored to his normal condition I would not influence his judgment in the least.

The séracs of  
the Col du  
Géant

Looking now to the right, I suddenly became aware that high above us, a multitude of crags and leaning columns of ice, on the solidity of which we could not for an instant calculate, covered the precipitous incline. We were not long without an illustration of the peril of our situation. We had reached a position where

massive ice cliffs protected us on one side, while in front of us was a space more open than any we had yet passed; the reason being that the ice avalanches had chosen it for their principal path. We had just stepped upon this space when a peal above us brought us to a stand. Crash! Crash! Crash! nearer and nearer, the sound becoming more continuous and confused, as the descending masses broke into smaller blocks. Onward they came! boulders half a ton and more in weight, leaping down with a kind of maniacal fury as if their sole mission was to crush the séracs to powder. Some of them, on striking the ice, rebounded like elastic balls, described parabolas through the air, again madly smote the ice, and scattered its dust like clouds in the atmosphere. Some blocks were deflected by the collision with the glacier, and were carried past us within a few yards of the spot where we stood. I had never before witnessed an exhibition of force at all comparable to this, and its proximity rendered that fearful which, at a little distance, would have been sublime.

My companion held his breath for a time and then exclaimed, 'C'est terrible! il faut retourner.' In fact, while the avalanche continued we could not at all calculate on our safety. When we heard the first peal we had instinctively retreated to the shelter of the ice bastions; but what if one of these missiles struck the tower beneath us! would it be able to withstand the shock? We knew not. In reply to the proposal of my companion I simply said, 'By all means, if you desire it, but let us wait a little.' I felt that fear was just as bad a counsel as rashness, and thought it but fair to wait until my companion's terror had subsided. We waited eagerly, and he seemed to gather courage and assurance. I scanned the heights, and saw that a little more effort in an upward direction would place us in a much less perilous position as far as the avalanches were concerned. I pointed this out to my companion and we went forward. Once indeed for a minute or two, I felt anxious. We had to cross in the shadow of a tower of ice, of a loose and threatening character, which quite overhung our track. The freshly broken masses at its base, and at some distance below it, showed that it must have partially given way some hours before.

'Don't speak or make any noise,' said my companion, and although rather sceptical as to the influence of speech in such a case, I held my tongue and escaped from the dangerous vicinity as fast as my legs and alpenstock could carry me.

Unbroken spaces, covered with snow, now began to spread between the crevasses; these latter, however, became larger, and were generally placed end to end *en échelon*. When therefore we arrived at the edge of a chasm, by walking along it we usually soon reached a point where a second one joined on to it. The extremities of the chasms ran parallel to each other for some distance, one being separated from the other, throughout these distances, by a wall of incipient ice, coped at the top by snow. At other places, however, the lower portion of the partition between the fissures had melted, leaving the chasm spanned by a bridge of snow, the capacity of which to bear us was often a matter of delicate experiment. Over these bridges we stepped as lightly as possible. 'Allez doucement ici' was the perpetual admonition of my companion, 'et il faut toujours sonder.' In many cases, indeed, we could not at all guess at the state of matters underneath the covering of snow. We had picked up a few hints upon this subject, but neither of us was at this time sufficiently experienced to make practical use of them. 'Sounding' too was rather weary work, as, to make it of any value, the baton must be driven into the snow with considerable force. Further up in the *névé* the fissures became less frequent, but some of them were of great depth and width. On those silent heights there is something peculiarly solemn in the aspect of the crevasses, yawning gloomily day and night as if with a never-satisfied hunger. We stumbled on the skeleton of a chamois, which had probably met its death by falling into a chasm, and been disgorged lower down. But a thousand chamois between those cavernous jaws would not make a mouthful. I scarcely knew which to choose—these pitfalls of the *névé* or the avalanches. The latter are terrible, but they are grand, outspoken things; the ice crags proclaim them from their heights, 'Do not trust us, we are momentary and merciless.' They wear an aspect of hostility undisguised; but these chasms of the *névé* are typified by the

treachery of the moral world ; they hide themselves under shining coverlets of snow and compass their ends by dissimulation.

After some time we alighted on the trace of those who had crossed the day before. The danger was over when we made the discovery, but it saved us some exploring amid the crevasses which still remained. We at length got quite clear of the fissures, and mounted zig-zag to the summit of the col. Clouds drove up against us from the valley of Courmayeur, but they made no way over the col. At the summit they encountered a stratum of drier air, mixing with which they were reduced, as fast as they came, to a state of invisible vapour. Upon the very top of the col, I spread my plaid, and with the appetites of hungry eagles we attacked our chicken and mutton. I examined the snow and made some experiments on sound ; but little Balmat's feet were so cold that he feared being frost-bitten, and at his entreaty we started on our descent again as soon as possible.

John Tyndall.

*Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.*

**Avalanche  
Adventures**

[This famous description of an avalanche accident on the Haut du Cry (a mountain in the Rhone valley) was included by Tyndall in his *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*. But it did not happen to Tyndall, but to Philip Gossett, by whom the account was written. Tyndall included it because Bennen, who perished, was his favourite guide.]

**(1) On the  
Haut du Cry**

AFTER three or four steps gained in the aforesaid manner, the snow became hard again. Bennen had not moved—he was evidently undecided what he should do. As soon, however, as he saw hard snow again, he advanced, and crossed parallel to, but above, the furrow the Ardon men had made. Strange to say, the snow supported him. While he was passing, I observed that the leader, Bevard, had ten or twelve feet of rope coiled round his shoulder. I of course at once told him to uncoil it, and get on to the arête, from which he was not more than fifteen feet distant. Bennen then told me to follow. I tried his steps, but sank up to my waist in the very first. So I went through the furrows, holding my elbow close to my body, so as not to touch the sides. This furrow was about twelve feet long, and as the snow was good on the other side,

we had all come to the false conclusion that the snow was accidentally softer there than elsewhere. Bennen advanced; he had made but a few steps when we heard a deep, cutting sound. The snow-field split in two, about fourteen or fifteen feet above us. The cleft was at first quite narrow, not more than an inch broad. An awful silence ensued; it lasted but a few seconds, and then it was broken by Bennen's voice, 'Wir sind alle verloren.' His words were slow and solemn and those who knew him felt what they really meant when spoken by such a man as Bennen. They were his last words. I drove my alpenstock into the snow, and brought the weight of my body to bear on it. I then waited. It was an awful moment of suspense. I turned my head towards Bennen to see whether he had done the same thing. To my astonishment I saw him turn round, face the valley, and stretch out both arms. The ground on which we stood began to move slowly, and I felt the utter uselessness of any alpenstock. From this moment I saw nothing of what had happened to the rest of the party. With a good deal of trouble I succeeded in turning round. The speed of the avalanche increased rapidly and before long I was covered up with snow. I was suffocating, when I suddenly came to the surface again. I was on a wave of the avalanche, and saw it before me as I was carried down. It was the most awful sight I ever saw. The head of the avalanche was already at the spot where we had made our last halt. The head alone was preceded by a thick cloud of snow-dust; the rest of the avalanche was clear. Around me I heard the horrid hissing of the snow, and far before me the thundering of the foremost part of the avalanche. To prevent myself sinking again, I made use of my arms, much in the same way as when swimming in a standing position. At last I noticed that I was moving slower; then I saw the pieces of snow in front of me stop at some yards' distance; then the snow straight before me stopped, and I heard on a large scale the same creaking sound that is produced when a heavy cart passes over hard-frozen snow in winter. I felt that I also had stopped, and instantly threw up both arms to protect my head, in case I should again be covered up. I had stopped, but the snow behind me was still in motion; its pressure

on my body was so strong that I thought I should be crushed to death. This tremendous pressure lasted but a short time—I was covered up by snow coming from behind me. My first impulse was to try and uncover my head—but this I could not do: the avalanche had frozen by pressure the moment it stopped, and I was frozen in. Whilst trying vainly to move my arms, I suddenly became aware that the hands as far as the wrist had the faculty of motion. The conclusion was easy, they must be above the snow. I set to work as well as I could; it was time, for I could not have held out much longer. At last I saw a faint glimmer of light. The crust above my head was getting thinner, but I could not reach it any more with my hands; the idea struck me that I might pierce it with my breath. After several efforts I succeeded in doing so, and felt suddenly a rush of air towards my mouth; I saw the sky again through a little round hole. A dead silence reigned around me; I was so surprised to be still alive, and so persuaded at the first moment that none of my fellow-sufferers had survived, that I did not even think of shouting for them. I then made vain efforts to extricate my arms, but found it impossible; the most I could do was to join the ends of my fingers, but they could not reach the snow any longer. After a few minutes I heard a man shouting; what a relief it was to know that I was not the sole survivor!—to know that perhaps he was not frozen in and could come to my assistance. I answered, the voice approached, but seemed undecided where to go, and yet it was now quite near. A sudden exclamation of surprise! Rebot had seen my hands. He cleared my head in an instant, and was about to try and cut me out completely, when I saw a foot above the snow, and so near to me that I could touch it with my arms, although they were not quite free yet. I at once tried to move the foot; it was my poor friend's. A pang of agony shot through me as I saw that the foot did not move. Poor Boissonnet had lost sensation, and was perhaps already dead.

Rebot did his best. After some time he wished me to help him, so he freed my arms a little more, so that I could make use of them. I could do but little, for Rebot had torn the axe from my shoulder as soon as he had cleared my head (I generally carry an axe separate from my alpenstock—the blade tied to the belt, and the

handle attached to the left shoulder). Before coming to me Rebot had helped Nance out of the snow; he was lying nearly horizontally, and was not much covered over. Nance found Bevard, who was upright in the snow, but covered up to the head. After about twenty minutes, the two last-named guides came up. I was at length taken out; the snow had to be cut with the axe down to my feet before I could be pulled out. A few minutes after 1 P.M. we came to my poor friend's face. . . . I wished the body to be taken out completely, but nothing could induce the three guides to work any longer, from the moment they saw it was too late to save him. I acknowledge that they were nearly as incapable of doing anything as I was. When I was taken out of the snow the cord had to be cut. We tried the end going towards Bennen, but could not move it; it went nearly straight down, and showed us that there was the grave of the bravest guide the Valais ever had, and ever will have.

Tyndall: *Hours of Exercise in the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

[This is an account, written by Tyndall, of an avalanche accident that happened to himself and his party on the Piz Morteratsch, a mountain in the Engadine above Pontresina 12,316 feet high.]

AFTER descending the rocks for some time Jenni turned and asked me whether I thought them or the ice-slope the better track. I pronounced without hesitation in favour of the rocks, but he seemed to misunderstand me, and turned towards the couloir. I stopped him at the edge of it, and said, 'Jenni, you know where you are going; the slope is pure ice.' He replied, 'I know it; but the ice is quite bare for a few yards only. Across this exposed portion I will cut steps, and then the snow which covers the ice will give us a footing.' He cut the steps, reached the snow, and descended carefully along it, all following him, apparently in good order. After some time, he stopped, turned, and looked upwards at the last three men. 'Keep carefully in the steps, gentlemen,' he said, 'a false step here might detach an avalanche.' The word was scarcely uttered when I heard the sound of a fall behind me, then a rush, and in a moment my two friends and their guide, all apparently entangled together, whirled past me. I suddenly planted myself to

(2) On the Piz  
Mortenatsch



resist their shock, but in an instant I was in their wake, for their impetus was irresistible. A moment afterwards Jenni was whirled away, and thus, in the twinkling of an eye, all five of us found ourselves riding downwards with uncontrollable speed on the back of an avalanche which a single slip had originated.

Previous to stepping on the slope I had, according to habit, made clear to my mind what was to be done in case of mishap; and when overthrown, I turned promptly on my face, and drove my baton through the moving snow, and into the ice underneath. No time, however, was allowed for the break's action; for I had held it firmly thus for a few seconds only when I came into collision with some obstacle and was rudely tossed through the air, Jenni at the same time being shot down upon me. Both of us here lost our batons. We had been carried over a crevasse, and hit its lower edge, and, instead of dropping into it, were pitched by our great velocity far beyond it. I was quite bewildered for a moment, but immediately righted myself, and could see the men in front of me half buried in the snow, and jolted from side to side by the ruts among which we were passing. Suddenly I saw them tumbled over by a lurch of the avalanche, and immediately afterwards found myself imitating their motion. This was caused by a second crevasse. Jenni knew of its existence and plunged, he told me, right into it—a brave act, but for the time unavailing. By jumping into the chasm he thought a strain might be put upon the rope sufficient to check the motion. But, though over thirteen stone in weight, he was violently jerked out of the fissure and almost squeezed to death by the pressure of the rope.

A long slope was below us, which led directly downwards to a brow where the glacier fell precipitously. At the base of the declivity the ice was cut by a series of profound chasms, towards which we were rapidly borne. The three foremost men rode upon the forehead of the avalanche, and were at times almost wholly immersed in the snow; but the moving layer was thinner behind, and Jenni rose incessantly and with desperate energy drove his feet into the firmer substance beneath. His voice, shouting, 'Halt! Herr Jesus, halt!' was the only one heard during the descent. A kind of condensed memory, such as that described by people



who have narrowly escaped drowning, took possession of me, and my power of reasoning remained intact. I thought of Bennen on the Haut de Cry, and muttered, 'It is now my turn.' Then I coolly scanned the men in front of me, and reflected that, if their *vis viva* was the only thing to be neutralised, Jenni and myself could stop them; but to arrest both them and the mass of snow in which they were caught was hopeless. I experienced no intolerable dread. In fact, the start was too sudden and the excitement of the rush too great to permit of the development of terror.

Looking in advance, I noticed that the slope, for a short distance became less steep, and then fell as before. 'Now or never we must be brought to rest.' The speed visibly slackened, and I thought we were saved. But the momentum had been too great; the avalanche crossed the brow and in part regained its motion. Here Hutchinson threw his arm round his friend, all hope being extinguished, while I grasped my belt and struggled to free myself. Finding this difficult, from the tossing, I sullenly resumed the strain on the rope. Destiny had so related the downward impetus to Jenni's pull as to give the latter a slight advantage, and the whole question was whether the opposing force would have sufficient time to act. This was also arranged in our favour, for we came to rest so near the brow that two or three seconds of our average motion of descent must have carried us over. Had this occurred, we should have fallen into the chasms, and been covered up by the tail of the avalanche. Hutchinson emerged from the snow with his forehead bleeding, but the wound was superficial; Jenni had a bit of flesh removed from his hand by collision against a stone; the pressure of the rope had left black welts on my arms; and we all experienced a tingling sensation over the hands, like that produced by incipient frost-bite, which continued for several days. This was all. I found a portion of my watch-chain hanging round my neck, another portion in my pocket; the watch was gone.<sup>1</sup>

Tyndall.

*Hours of Exercise in the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Douglas Freshfield writes me on this: 'The watch was recovered a week afterwards. I was at Pontresina at the time and remember Tyndall coming in holding it up and saying, "See the little thing! It goes! it goes!"'—H.S.

[Another of Tyndall's adventures. The description of an accident to a porter in the course of his ascent of the Jungfrau in company with Huxley.]

**A Fall into a  
Crevasse**

WE moved briskly along the frozen incline, until, after a couple of hours' march, we saw a solitary human being standing on the lateral moraine of the glacier, near the point where we were to quit it for the cave of the Faulberg.

At first this man excited no attention. He stood and watched us, but did not come towards us, until finally our curiosity was aroused by observing that he was one of our own two men. The glacier here is always cut by crevasses, which, while they present no real difficulty, require care. We approached our porter, but he never moved; and when we came up to him he looked stupid, and did not speak until he was spoken to. Bennen addressed him in the patois of the place, and he answered in the same patois. His answer must have been more than usually obscure, for Bennen misunderstood the most important part of it. 'My God!' he exclaimed, turning to us, 'Walters is killed!' Walters was the guide at the *Æggischhorn*, with whom, in the present instance, we had nothing to do. 'No, not Walters,' responded the man; 'it is my comrade that is killed.' Bennen looked at him with a wild bewildered stare. 'How killed?' he exclaimed. 'Lost in a crevasse,' was the reply. We were all so stunned that for some moments we did not quite seize the import of the terrible statement. Bennen at length tossed his arms in the air, exclaiming, 'Jesu Maria! what am I to do?' With the swiftness that some ascribe to dreams, I surrounded the facts with imaginary adjuncts, one of which was that the man had been drawn dead from the crevasse, and was now a corpse in the cave of the Faulberg; for I took it for granted that, had he been still entombed, his comrade would have run or called for our aid. Several times in succession the porter affirmed that the missing man was certainly dead. 'How does he know that he is dead?' Lubbock demanded. 'A man is sometimes rendered insensible by a fall without being killed.' This question was repeated in German, but met with the same dogmatic response. 'Where is the man?' I asked. 'There,' replied the porter, stretching his arm towards the glacier.

'In the crevasse?' A stolid 'Ja' was the answer. It was with difficulty that I quelled an imprecation. 'Lead the way to the place, you blockhead!' and he led the way.

We were soon beside a wide and jagged cleft which resembled a kind of a cave more than an ordinary crevasse. The cleft had been spanned by a snow bridge, now broken, and to the edge of which footsteps could be traced. The glacier at the place was considerably torn, but simple patience was the only thing needed to unravel its complexity. This quality our porter lacked, and hoping to make shorter work of it, he attempted to cross the bridge. It gave way, and he went down, carrying an immense load of *débris* with him. We looked into the hole, at one end of which the vision was cut short by darkness, while immediately under the broken bridge it was crammed with snow and shattered icicles. We saw nothing more. We listened with strained attention, and from the depths of the glacier issued a low moan. Its repetition assured us that it was no delusion—the man was still alive. Bennen from the first had been extremely excited; and the fact of his having, as a Catholic, saints and angels to appeal to, augmented his emotion. When he heard the moaning he became almost frantic. He attempted to get into the crevasse, but was obliged to recoil. It was quite plain that a second life was in danger, for my guide seemed to have lost all control. I placed my hand heavily upon his shoulder, and admonished him that upon his coolness depended the life of his friend. 'If you behave like a man, we shall save him: if like a woman, he is lost.'

A first-rate rope accompanied the party, but unhappily it was with the man in the crevasse. Coats, waistcoats, and braces were instantly taken off and knotted together. I watched Bennen while this work was going on; his hands trembled with excitement and his knots were evidently insecure. The last junction complete, he exclaimed, 'Now let me down!' 'Not until each of these knots has been tested; not an inch.' Two of them gave way, and Lubbock's waistcoat also proved too tender for the strain. The *débris* was about forty feet from the surface of the glacier, but two intermediate prominences afforded a kind of footing. Bennen was dropped down upon one of these; I followed, being let down by

Lubbock and the other porter. Bennen then descended the remaining distance, and was followed by me. More could not find room.

The shape and size of the cavity were such as to produce a kind of resonance, which rendered it difficult to fix the precise spot from which the sound issued; but the moaning continued, becoming to all appearance gradually feebler. Fearing to wound the man, the ice-rubbish was cautiously rooted away; it rang curiously as it fell into the adjacent gloom. A layer two or three feet thick was thus removed; and finally, from the frozen mass, and so bloodless as to be almost as white as the surrounding snow, issued a single human hand. The fingers moved. Round it we rooted, cleared the arm, and reached the knapsack, which we cut away. We also regained our rope. The man's head was then laid bare, and my brandy-flask was immediately at his lips. He tried to speak, but his words jumbled themselves to a dull moan. Bennen's feelings got the better of him at intervals; he wrought like a hero, but at times he needed guidance and stern admonition. The arms once free, we passed the rope underneath them, and tried to drag the man out. But the ice-fragments round him had regelated so as to form a solid case. Thrice we essayed to draw him up, thrice we failed; he had literally to be hewn out of the ice, and not until his last foot was extricated were we able to lift him. By pulling him from above, and pushing him from below, the man was at length raised to the surface of the glacier.

For an hour we had been in the crevasse in shirt-sleeves—the porter had been in it for two hours—and the dripping ice had drenched us. Bennen, moreover, had worked with the energy of madness, and now the reaction came. He shook as if he would fall to pieces; but brandy and some dry covering revived him. The rescued man was helpless, unable to stand, unable to utter an articulate sentence. Bennen proposed to carry him down the glacier towards home. Had this been attempted, the man would certainly have died on the ice. Bennen thought he could carry him for two hours; but the guide underrated his own exhaustion and overrated the vitality of the porter. 'It cannot be thought of,' I said; 'to the cave of Faulberg, where we must tend him as well as we can.' We got him to the side of the glacier, where Bennen took him on his back;

in ten minutes he sank under his load. It was now my turn, so I took the man on my back, and plodded on with him as far as I was able. Helping each other thus by turns, we reached the mountain grotto.

The sun had set, and the crown of the Jungfrau was embedded in amber light. Thinking that the Märjelin See might be reached before darkness, I proposed starting in search of help. Bennen protested against my going alone, and I thought I noticed moisture in Lubbock's eye. Such an occasion brings out a man's feelings if he have any. I gave them both my blessing and made for the glacier. But my anxiety to get quickly clear of the crevasses defeated its own object. Thrice I found myself in difficulty, and the light was visibly departing. The conviction deepened that persistence would be folly, and the most impressive moment of my existence was that on which I stopped at the brink of a profound fissure and looked upon the mountains and the sky. The serenity was perfect—not a cloud, not a breeze, not a sound, while the last hues of sunset spread over the solemn west.

I returned: warm wine was given to our patient, and all our dry clothes were wrapped around him. Hot-water bottles were placed at his feet, and his back was briskly rubbed. He continued to groan a long time, but finally both this and the trembling ceased. Bennen watched him solemnly, and at length muttered in anguish, 'Sir, he is dead!' I leaned over the man and found him breathing gently: I felt his pulse—it was beating tranquilly. 'Not dead, dear old Bennen; he will be able to crawl home with us in the morning.' This prediction was justified by the event; and two days afterwards we saw him at Laax, minus a bit of his ear, with a bruise upon his cheek, and a few scars upon his hand, but without a broken bone or serious injury of any kind.

The self-denying conduct of the second porter made us forget his stupidity—it may have been stupefaction. As I lay there wet, through the long hours of that dismal night, I almost registered a vow never to tread upon a glacier again. But, like the forces in the physical world, human emotions vary with their distance from their origin, and a year afterwards I was again upon the ice.

Tyndall.

*Hours of Exercise in the Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

## WHYMPER

[This incident, recorded in *Scrambles*, happened when Whymper was training himself for the Matterhorn. It occurred in 1862.]

Mr.  
Whymper's  
Escape  
A Tumble

THE Col du Lion was passed, and fifty yards more would have placed me on the 'Great Staircase' down which one can run. But on arriving at an angle of the cliffs of the Tête du Lion, while skirting the upper edge of the snow which abuts against them, I found that the heat of the two past days had nearly obliterated the steps which had been cut when coming up. The rocks happened to be impracticable just at this corner, and it was necessary to make the steps afresh. The snow was too hard to beat or tread down, and at the angle it was all but ice; half a dozen steps only were required, and then the ledges could be followed again. So I held to the rock with my right hand, and prodded at the snow with the point of my stick until a good step was made, and then, leaning round the angle, did the same for the other side. So far well, but in attempting to pass the corner I slipped and fell.

The slope was steep on which this took place, and was at the top of a gully that led down through two subordinate buttresses towards the Glacier du Lion—which was just seen, a thousand feet below. The gully narrowed and narrowed, until there was a mere thread of snow lying between two walls of rock, which came to an abrupt termination at the top of a precipice that intervened between it and the glacier. Imagine a funnel cut in half through its length, placed at an angle of 45 degrees, with its point below and its side uppermost, and you will have a fair idea of the place.

The knapsack brought my head down first, and I pitched into some rocks about a dozen feet below; they caught something and tumbled me off the edge, head over heels, into the gully; the baton was dashed from my hands, and I whirled downwards in a series of bounds, each longer than the last; now over ice, now into rocks; striking my head four or five times, each time with increased force. The last bound sent me spinning through the air, in a leap of fifty or sixty feet, from one side of the gully to the other, and I struck

the rocks, luckily, with the whole of my left side. They caught my clothes for a moment, and I fell back on to the snow with motion arrested. My head fortunately came the right side up, and with a few frantic catches brought me to a halt, in the neck of the gully, and on the verge of the precipice. Baton, hat, and veil skimmed by and disappeared, and the crash of the rocks—which I had started—as they fell on to the glacier, told how narrow had the escape been from utter destruction. As it was, I fell nearly 200 feet in seven or eight bounds. Ten feet more would have taken me in one gigantic leap of 800 feet on to the glacier below.

The situation was sufficiently serious. The rocks could not be let go for a moment, and the blood was spiriting out of more than twenty cuts. The most serious ones were in the head, and I vainly tried to close them with one hand, whilst holding on with the other. It was useless; the blood jerked out in blinding jets at each pulsation. At last, in a moment of inspiration, I kicked out a big lump of snow, and stuck it as a plaster on my head. The idea was a happy one, and the flow of blood diminished. Then, scrambling up, I got, not a moment too soon, to a place of safety, and fainted away. The sun was setting when consciousness returned, and it was pitch dark before the Great Staircase was descended; but, by a combination of luck and care, the whole 4900 feet of descent to Breuil was accomplished without a slip or missing the way. I entered the inn, stealthily, wishing to escape to my room unnoticed. But Favre met me in the passage, demanded, 'Who is it?' screamed with fright when he got a light, and aroused the household. Two dozen heads then held solemn council over mine, with more talk than action. The natives were unanimous in recommending that hot wine mixed with salt should be rubbed into the cuts. I protested, but they insisted. It was all the doctoring they received. Whether their rapid healing was to be attributed to that simple remedy, or to a good state of health, is a question. They closed up remarkably quickly, and in a few days I was able to move again.

E. Whymper.

*Scrambles amongst the Alps.*

John Murray.



## MUMMERY

[I give here as specimens of the rock-climbing achievements of 1890-1900, two of Mummery's most sensational narratives. His descriptions are among the dizziest in all climbing literature, and this account of the climb of the Col du Lion is a specimen of one of his exciting grapples with the perpendicular.]

**Mummery's  
Climbs**

**(1) The Col  
du Lion**

BURGENER took the lead again, and soon found that he had no ordinary work before him. The ice was bare and as hard as well-frozen ice can be; it was, moreover, excessively steep. So evil did it look above, that he halted and gazed anxiously at the rocks of the Matterhorn to see if we could escape in that direction. It was, however, obvious that we should encounter prolonged difficulty on them; besides which it would leave the problem of the couloir unsolved. Once more he turned sullenly to the wall of ice, and foot by foot hewed out a way. The projecting rocks on our right, ever tilting the slope outwards, forced us to the left into a sort of a semicircular recess in the cliff. Suddenly the step-cutting ceases. 'Der Teufel' is apostrophised in soul-curdling terms, and half the saints in the Romish calendar are charged, in the strongest language known to the German tongue, with the criminal neglect of their most obvious duties.

Burgener's axe had broken!

Midway in an ice couloir two hundred feet high a single axe alone stood between us and utter helplessness. I untied and carefully lashed my axe to the rope and sent it up to Burgener. The rope then declined to come back anywhere within my reach, and I had the pleasure of ascending the next eighty feet without its moral support, and which was worse, without an axe. Rejoining Burgener, the broken weapon was made over to me. We were now on a level with the top of the projecting rocks, and could see that, supported by their topmost crag, a long ribbon of snow led upwards. Once on this snow it seemed as if our progress would be comparatively easy, though, as Burgener showed, by the simple expedient of chucking a knob of ice across, it was of that evil, powdery sort that the guides call 'pulverischen.' Since, moreover, it was lying at the very steepest angle consistent with remaining at rest, it was



evident that greater reliance would have to be placed in Providence than is usually considered desirable in these degenerate days. The difficulty was, however, to reach it. I have already explained that the projecting rocks had forced us to the left into a sort of blind semicircular hollow. A few feet above, the ice, up which we had been cutting, thinned out against overhanging rock ; while to cross to the snow involved the passage of an almost perpendicular wall, thickly glazed with ice. This traverse of fifteen feet or more looked scarcely possible. For once in his life Burgener suggested retreat, and we should have both returned incontinently down the couloir, running the gauntlet of falling stones, and facing even the horrors of that hideous ice slope, with its thin surface of snow already relaxed by the warm rays of the midday sun, had it not been for the absolute belief I reposed in certain previous utterances of my brave companion, to the effect that retreat was impossible, and to attempt it certain destruction. Confident in this belief, I thought the best thing to do was to keep up the spirits of the party, to scout the idea of turning back, and to shout 'vorwärts,' strengthened by such allusions to the supernatural powers, as my limited knowledge of Saas Thal patois would render effective. The aid of the other spirits, called from the 'vasty deep' of my pocket, was also invoked, and then the attack was begun.

The ice was too thin to allow steps of such depth to be cut as would enable us to change our feet in them. Burgener therefore adopted the expedient of cutting a continuous ledge along which, by the aid of handholds cut in the ice above, one could just manage to shuffle. This involved an extraordinary amount of labour. One hand had always to be clinging to the hold above, whilst the other wielded the axe. Before the traverse was half completed Burgener had to retreat, both to rest and to rub some warmth and feeling into his left hand, chilled by constantly clinging to the ice. After a short halt, he returned to the attack, but another five minutes again forced him to recoil, and, with a melancholy air, he showed me his right wrist, badly swollen with the strain of one-handed step cutting. Happily the shelf was nearly completed, and, advancing once more, he was able to reach the snow ribbon with his axe. It afforded, however, no support,

being loose and incoherent to its very core ; so the weary cutting had to go on till he could set his foot on the treacherously piled mass. Very cautiously he tried to tread it down, and then slowly swung his weight on to it. Needless to say, I watched eagerly the behaviour of the snow. If it slithered away bodily, as it seemed much inclined to do, nothing could prevent our making a short and rapid descent to the Bergschrund.

Happily, though a good deal streamed down in incipient avalanches, the core stood firm, and a hoarse shout of triumph relieved the pent-up feelings of the party. Burgener immediately began to force his way up the knife-edge which formed the upper surface of the ribbon, one leg on one side and one on the other. Our whole length of rope being paid out I shuffled along the shelf, past the corner, and up to my companion. Before us was a long open ice slope, through which occasional rocks projected. The slight support so afforded had sufficed to hold long ribbons of dust-like snow in position above them, and we perceived with joy that the final wall, surmounted by a broken cornice, was the only serious obstruction now before us. The cliffs on the Matterhorn side here recede considerably, greatly adding to the width of the couloir, and giving a sense of freedom and daylight that is lacking lower down. Our chief delight, however, was the snow, of the worst and most powdery description it is true, but still snow. I am aware that all authorities agree in preferring ice to incoherent snow, but when the ice slope is measured by hundreds of feet, and when the northern couloir of the 'Lion,' swept by the afternoon avalanches, is below, I will frankly confess that any snow, however bad, is a delight, and its treacherous aid most thankfully accepted.

We made our way upwards on ribbon after ribbon, cutting across the intervening stretches of ice, and in this way mounted rapidly till we reached a continuous slope of snow that led us to the foot of a low rocky wall, surmounted by a projecting, square-cut cornice from which the flimsier portions had broken away. The face of this final cliff consists of loose, disintegrated rock. It appeared, indeed, to be only held together by the snow and ice with which it was plastered. However, it had to be ascended, so we once more rubbed a little life and warmth into chilled fingers, and then

Burgener set to work. Inch by inch and yard by yard, I paid out the rope till he reached the base of the cornice. It was soon evident that a direct assault would not be successful, so he made his way to the right, to a point where the outer fringes and icicles had torn a mass of the more solid cornice away with them in their fall. Once in this gap, he soon gets one hand on to the hard-frozen Col, the other waves his hat, and with a triumphant though breathless jodel, he draws himself over the edge of the grimdest wall it has ever been my luck to scale. Owing to the traverse Burgener had made, the rope did not afford that sense of security and comfort which is so pleasing to the amateur, and it was with no little delight that, on reaching a gap in the cornice, I saw a red hand appear, and a moment later was hauled bodily on to the pass.

Mummery.

*My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

[Recorded under the title of 'An Inaccessible Peak.']

It was certainly one of the most forbidding rocks I have ever set eyes upon. Unlike the rest of the peak, it was smooth to the touch, and its square-cut edges offered no hold or grip of any sort. True, the block was fractured from top to bottom, but the crack, four or five inches wide, had edges as smooth and true as a mason could have hewn them, and had not one of those irregular and convenient backs not infrequently possessed by such clefts. Even the dangerous helm of a semi-loose stone, wedged with doubtful security between the opposing walls, was lacking. Added to all this a great rock overhung the top, and would obviously require a powerful effort just when the climber was most exhausted.

(2) The Grépon  
Crack

Under these circumstances, Burgener and I set to work to throw a rope over the top, whilst Venetz reposed in a graceful attitude rejoicing in a quiet pipe. After many efforts, in the course of which both Burgener and I nearly succeeded in throwing ourselves over on to the Mer de Glace, but dismally failed in landing the rope, we became virtuous, and decided that the rock must be climbed by the fair methods of honourable war. To this end we poked up Venetz with the ice-axe (he was by now enjoying a

peaceful nap), and we then generally pulled ourselves together and made ready for the crucial struggle.

Our rope-throwing operations had been carried out from the top of a sort of narrow wall, about two feet wide, and perhaps six feet above the gap. Burgener, posted on this wall, stood ready to help Venetz with the ice-axe as soon as he should get within his reach, whilst my unworthy self, planted in the gap, was able to assist him in the first part of his journey. So soon as Venetz got beyond my reach, Burgener leant across the gap, and, jamming the point of the axe against the face of the rock, made a series of footholds of doubtful security whereon Venetz could rest and gain strength for each successive effort. At length he got above all these adventitious aids and had to depend exclusively on his splendid skill. Inch by inch he forced his way, gasping for breath, and his hand wandering over the smooth rock in those vague searches for non-existent hold which it is positively painful to witness. Burgener and I watched him with intense anxiety, and it was with no slight feeling of relief that we saw the fingers of one hand reach the firm hold offered by the square-cut top. A few moments' rest, and he made his way over the projecting rock, whilst Burgener and I yelled ourselves hoarse. When the rope came down for me, I made a brilliant attempt to ascend unaided. Success attended my first efforts, then came a moment of metaphorical suspense, promptly followed by the real thing; and, kicking like a spider, I was hauled on to the top, where I listened with unruffled composure to sundry sarcastic remarks concerning those who put their trust in tennis shoes and scorn the sweet persuasion of the rope.

Mummery.

*My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

### A BREATHLESS CLIMB

[It will be seen from the following that Mr. Mummery has been out-mummed.]

The Grépon  
from the Mer  
de Glace in  
1911

THE general plan of operations was to make for the base of a rib of more broken rock that appeared to continue nearly to the summit of the peak on the further side of the great central precipice, and with this object Knubel led diagonally upwards

across the lower buttress. This was, to some of the party, familiar ground, and for some considerable time progress was rapid. An occasional difficult pitch gave momentary pause, but for the most part all the members of the party were able to move together, and the impression left by the early part of the climb was one of surprise at the extent of comparatively easy ground on so steep a face. The 'red tower,' which had been a conspicuous feature of previous exploration, was soon left far behind, and nearly two-thirds of the wall appeared to have been climbed. Yet, curiously enough, notwithstanding the unexpected ease with which this had been accomplished, few, if any, members of the party entertained at this time much hope of ultimate success. The early morning reaction still lingered, and from time to time the leader showed hesitation as to the best line of advance, or looked doubtfully at the great slabs above. The feeling of an impending crisis was in the air, and the critical moment was not long in coming. A point had been reached on a rib which was still some distance to the right of the line which seemed to offer the only chance of completing the ascent. Progress by this rib appeared possible—in fact, Knubel, followed by Brocherel, had ascended 100 feet or so with some difficulty; but it meant ultimate failure, for the rib led away to the right, and at a higher level the party would clearly be cut off from the main peak by slabs which it would be hopeless to attempt to traverse. To the left of the rib was a deeply cut gully, and a little further on an open slabby couloir, both difficult certainly of access; but beyond was a magnificent traverse, leading steeply upwards in the direction of the desired rib. Could that traverse be reached? Judgment had almost gone by default, when Young, prospecting across the first gully, and 'still nursing the unconquerable hope,' discovered a belay which would safeguard the descent to the second couloir, and a well-placed platform on its farther side that could, if necessary, secure a retreat. The day was won, for the determination of the amateur not to be beaten came as an inspiration to the professional. Difficulties far greater than any that had yet been encountered lay ahead; but they were immaterial, for from that moment doubt and diffidence vanished, and it seemed that nothing could stop the leader. This happy

change of mood speedily proved infectious, and on a ledge beyond the traverse lunch was discussed by as light-hearted a picnic-party as was perhaps ever assembled on a hitherto unclimbed 3000-foot rock wall.

Above, rising from a charming platform, which was unanimously felt to deserve a name, and was there and then christened the *Niche des Amis*, was one of the prettiest problems of the day—a 45-foot vertical right-angled corner. It was climbed by a crack for the hand and a convenient leaf for the foot. Higher the climb followed the line of least resistance up a succession of slabs, flakes, and cracks, where the ordinary hold was an underpull for the hands and friction for the feet. A short rest was taken on a little projecting shoulder immediately below the formidable slabs of the final section, while a caravan that had arrived on the summit by the ordinary route looked down on the party with apparent and clamorous curiosity as to how they had got there. A sequence of difficult chimneys landed the party on a ledge where further progress looked hopeless. But a level traverse over a blind corner on the left led finally to the foot of a 200-foot track, in part overhanging, but offering the only prospect of further advance. The party were soon strung out in its interior in positions of varying discomfort. A projecting rock in the most constricted portion stopped the leader for some time, and seemed likely to stop Brocherel's bulk and sack for ever. However, they got through eventually, and while the rest of the party struggled successively with the difficulty, and wished their sacks and axes had never been born, it became clear from the general tenor of the conversation up above that the leader was occupied with something really serious. The long chimney gave out under an overhanging wall, and the only escape was off a supporting head up a steep and holdless slab, over a corner to the right, and up a second exposed and equally holdless slab. It was a passage that certainly came very near to the limits of possibility, and in effecting it the leader seems to have relied chiefly upon the support afforded by an axe inserted in an invisible sloping crack. But exactly how the feat was accomplished will always remain a mystery to the writer, who, upon his arrival on the scene, hastened to avail himself of the more

reliable support of a spare rope dangling more or less inconveniently in space.

Beyond this exacting passage one more obstacle had to be surmounted—a detached block, which, though admirably suited to a climber 12 or 15 feet high, proved a severe strain upon arm-muscles exhausted by the long drawn-out struggle in the chimney. It may be an excellent rule in rock-climbing to keep the arms in reserve for some supreme effort that is never required, but on the final 500 feet of the Mer de Glace face of the Grépon the rule is best honoured in a continuous breach. However, the end was now at hand. Another 50 foot chimney, and the party were looking down on the Nantillons glacier from the well-known gap between the Pic Balfour and the summit. The great rock wall had been climbed, but the summit of the Grépon had still to be reached. The 'Dunod' chimney, by which the usual descent from the summit is effected on a spare rope, might conceivably have been forced, but in any case it was not the Mer de Glace face. Could the climb be completed by that face? With such a leader it was worth trying, and the whole party traversed round and upwards on to the leaf of rock below the peak on the Mer de Glace side. From that position the writer witnessed what was certainly the most sensational achievement in his rock-climbing experience. With one foot thrust against the side wall of the short overhanging chimney, the leader, holding himself in with his axe inserted in the chimney, sought for what seemed an interminable time to gain the few extra inches of height that would enable him to jam some portion of his disengaged hand in the crack above its overhanging portion. Every moment it seemed that the strain on muscle and nerve must become too great. At last, by a supreme effort, the axe was released, and its point inserted a few feet higher up the crack in some invisible cranny. Then, inch by inch, the necessary height was gained, and with a final effort the summit was won. It was a great victory, and the rest of the party hastened up to congratulate the victor. From bivouac to summit the climb had occupied nearly eleven hours.

Of the evening descent in a glorious sunset to Chamonix it is not necessary to write; but by one member of the party, who had



had the unexpected good luck to share its fortunes, the memories of those hours of relaxed effort, in which the day's adventures were told and retold, will not soon be forgotten.

B. Todhunter.

*The Climbers' Club Journal*, February 1912.

By kind permission of Mr. Arnold Lunn.

### GUIDO REY

[This is a description of a daring attempt to climb the Matterhorn by the Furggen Ridge, made by that splendid Italian climber and writer, Guido Rey. It will be seen that the attempt failed. But none the less it is one of the most thrilling narratives in Alpine literature.]

The Matter-  
horn again.  
Rey's Attempt  
by the  
Furggen  
Ridge

FOR ten to twenty minutes I rested, standing upright on a tiny platform, without relinquishing my grasp of the great rope, and then I heard a laconic 'Venez,' and I started upwards once more, with my face turned towards the mountain. 'What in Heaven's name are you at up there?' I shouted. A small stone had been dislodged by the feet of one of my companions, and had hit me on the head.

I candidly confess that I had then to summon all my resolution in order not to relinquish my grip and let myself fall.

At that instant I was a double personality, consisting of myself and another man much greater and stronger than I, who spoke within me: 'Fool,' he cried, 'do you not see that if you let yourself go we shall all fall together?'

'Come, be brave! An effort, another, all right!' It was the imperious voice of animal instinct, a valuable friend that the comfort and security of our ordinary life has lulled to sleep in us, but that awakes in moments of need.

I had heard it before in other adventures in the mountains, but it had never spoken to me so loud and so clearly.

'Vous y êtes, Monsieur?' shouted Aimé just then.

'Right,' I answered, though I was still shaken by my internal struggle.

'C'est bien; alors j'avance.'

As I climbed, each time I came into contact with the rock I received a wound, I felt a pain; the muscles of my arms

were growing tired with the tension of continuous effort: I began to feel how heavy my body was. Something passed between me and the sun; it seemed the shadow of some body travelling rapidly through space. Another shadow passed, a swish of wings was heard; a black object glided past close at hand, falling from above and disappearing below like a falling stone. These were the crows of the Matterhorn, the lords of the place; there were a whole family of them, and one did not know whence they had issued. Up here, among the clefts of the rocks, they had hitherto been undisturbed by man, and when they saw the unaccustomed sight of visitors they flew restlessly to and fro, with ill-omened cawing, round about the intruders as they hung on the rope. They troubled me. One of them brushed my head with its wing; the horrible fancy flashed through my mind that they were like birds of prey hovering about a man on a gallows. . . .

I was evidently tired; it was fatigue that created that dark vision in my mind.

I have never understood as clearly as on that day how the excellence of a climber depends not only on his feet, his arms, or his lungs, but has a deeper seat in us—in our brains and our hearts.

But the long duration of our climb told me that we were at a great height, and that the end of our difficulties must be near.

And after a bit which seemed to me steeper and worse than all the others, I raised my head above the level of a ledge, and with a last effort I lifted my whole body on to it.

I had emerged on to a small and almost level platform, on which was still a little snow, the only snow I had met with on the cliff. I saw my guides standing still at a short distance. Beyond them a staircase of rock not quite so terribly steep led up to the foot of a wall, which was, as far as I could judge, about fifty feet high, and on the upper edge of this wall I saw some heads appear and move about. They belonged to Daniel and his men. I remember these things with a marvellous clearness. We were about a hundred feet vertically distant from our comrades; we could recognise their figures; we could now easily talk to them and be understood, we were so near.

The great rope united us to them, the rope alone ; we were separated by the low wall, whose upper edge overhung its base. I was with hesitation approaching the goal of my expedition, and I already ventured to believe I should succeed. I reckoned that from where we were to the summit was not more than a hundred and ten yards.

Victory depended entirely on that last piece of smooth, slender rope that hung in space. Above that were our friends, and they would help us, and the Matterhorn would be mine !

Antoine had advanced without loss of time to the foot of the wall ; there he stopped, and consulted with those above concerning the means of overcoming our last obstacle. I remained on the patch of snow, without sitting down. It was four o'clock ; we had taken four hours to climb up here from the Shoulder, a height of about three hundred feet. I do not know how long the consultation lasted. Meanwhile, with a view to lightening our load, Antoine had passed up to the others one of our sacks, which contained my kodak.

I watched the sack as it ascended, tied to the rope, and swinging to and fro in the air, and I saw it received by Daniel.

Happy little kodak ! You had conquered the Furggen ridge of the Matterhorn.

I next saw Antoine advance a few steps, seize the rope which was hanging inside the curve of the cliff, climb three or four arms' length, raising himself by sheer pulling on the rope, and scraping the rock with his feet. He stopped with his boots planted against the wall ; the rope was swinging uncertainly ; he lost his footing and came down again. I asked Daniel to throw him down a knotted rope, and forthwith the whole long rope was pulled up by Daniel, and in the upper laboratory he and his men employed themselves busily in tying two ropes together in such a way as to form a single knotted one. It kept us waiting a considerable time, but at length it descended.

Antoine fastened it below as best he could, in a fissure of the rock ; then he began to climb vigorously up it. This was the attempt that was to decide our fate. Once more I saw him climb up a few yards, but the rope, though fixed at the bottom, was pulled out of its place by his weight, and began to swing to and fro in the air.

I saw Antoine's body, hanging by the arms, swung right and left. He was no longer ascending; his efforts were evidently paralysed by the uncertain oscillation of the rope. He held himself for a few instants more by one of the knots, tried to draw his body near to the rock, shouted a few words to those above . . . and then, what will you? Then he began to let himself down slowly, reached the base of the wall, whence he had started, relinquished the rope, and came back towards us.

We were defeated.

Guido Rey  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

### HILAIRE BELLOC

[These descriptions of Alpine adventure by Mr. Hilaire Belloc are especially interesting as coming from one who is, by confession, not a climber of mountains. But no confession or profession can prevent him from being one of the most distinguished living prose-writers.]

SUDDENLY, with no warning to prepare the mind, a faint but distinct wind blew upon me, the mist rose in a wreath backward and upward, and I was looking through clear immensity, not at any ridge, but over an awful gulf at great white fields of death. The Alps were right upon me and before me, overwhelming and commanding empty downward distances of air. Between them and me was a narrow dreadful space of nothingness and silence, and a sheer mile below us both, a floor to that prodigious hollow, lay the little lake.

'The Path to Rome.'

My stone had not been a halting-place at all, but was itself the summit of the ridge, and those two rocks on either side of it framed a notch upon the very edge and skyline of the high hills of Brienz.

Surprise and wonder had not time to form in my spirit before both were swallowed up by fear. The proximity of that immense wall of cold, the Alps, seen thus full from the level of its middle height and comprehended as it cannot be from the depths; its suggestion of something never changing throughout eternity—yet dead—was a threat to the eager mind. They, the vast Alps, all

wrapped round in ice, frozen, and their immobility enhanced by the delicate, roaming veils which (as from an attraction) hovered in their hollows, seemed to halt the process of living. And the living soul whom they thus perturbed was supported by no companionship. There were no trees or blades of grass around me, only the uneven and primal stones of that height. There were no birds in the gulf; there was no sound. And the whiteness of the glaciers, the blackness of the snow-streaked rocks beyond, was glistening and unsoftened. There had come something evil into their sublimity. I was afraid.

Nor could I bear to look downwards. The slope was in no way a danger. A man could walk up it without often using his hands, and a man could go down it slowly without any direct fall, though here and there he would have to turn round at each dip or step and hold with his hands and feel a little for his foothold. I suppose the general slope, down, down, to where the green began was not sixty degrees, but have you ever tried looking down five thousand feet at sixty degrees? It drags the mind after it, and I could not bear to begin the descent.

However, I reasoned with myself. I said to myself that a man should only be afraid of real dangers. That nightmare was not for the daylight. That there was no mist, but a warm sun. Then choosing a gully where water sometimes ran, but now dry, I warily began to descend, using my staff and leaning well backwards.

There was this disturbing thing about the gully, that it went in steps, and before each step one saw the sky just a yard or two ahead; one lost the comforting sight of earth. One knew of course that it would only be a little drop, and that the slope would begin again, but it disturbed one. And it is a trial to drop or clamber down, say fourteen or fifteen feet, sometimes twenty, and then to find no flat foothold but that eternal steep beginning again.

I went very slowly. When I was about half-way down and had come to a place where a shoulder of heaped rock stood on my left and where little parallel ledges led up to it, having grown accustomed to the descent and easier in my mind, I sat down on a slab and drew imperfectly the things I saw: the lake below me, the first forests clinging to the foot of the Alps beyond, their higher

slopes of snow, and the clouds that had now begun to gather round them and that altogether hid the last third of their enormous height.

Then I saw a steamer on the lake. I felt in touch with men. The slope grew easier. I snapped my fingers at the great devils that haunt high mountains. I sniffed the gross and comfortable air of the lower valleys. I entered the belt of wood and was soon going quite a pace through the trees, for I had found a path, was now able to sing. So I did.

. . . . .

At three o'clock the guide knocked at my door, and I rose and came out to him. We drank coffee and ate bread. We put into our sacks ham and bread, and he white wine and I brandy. Then we set out. The rain had dropped to a drizzle, and there was no wind. The sky was obscured for the most part, but here and there a star. The hills hung awfully above us in the night as we crossed the spongy valley. A little wooden bridge took us over the young Rhone, here only a stream, and we followed a path into the tributary ravine which leads to the Nufenen and the Gries. In a mile or two it was a little lighter, and this was as well, for some weeks before a great avalanche had fallen, and we had to cross it gingerly. Beneath the wide cap of frozen snow ran a torrent roaring. I remembered Colorado and how I had crossed the Arkansaw on such a bridge as a boy. We went on in the uneasy dawn. The woods began to show, and there was a cross where a man had slipped from above that very April and been killed. Then, most ominous and disturbing, the drizzle changed to a rain, and the guide shook his head and said it would be snowing higher up. We went on and it grew lighter. Before it was really day (or else the weather confused and darkened the sky) we crossed a good bridge, built long ago, and we halted at a shed where the cattle lie in the late summer when the snow is melted. There we rested a moment.

But on leaving its shelter we noticed many disquieting things. The place was a hollow, the end of the ravine—a bowl, as it were; one way out of which is the Nufenen, and the other the Gries.

We noticed, I say, many disquieting things. First, all that bowl or cup below the passes was a carpet of snow, save where

patches of black water showed, and all the passes and mountains, from top to bottom, were covered with very thick snow; the deep surface of it soft and fresh fallen. Secondly, the rain had turned into snow. It was falling thickly all around. Nowhere have I more perceived the immediate presence of great Death. Thirdly, it was far colder, and we felt the beginning of a wind. Fourthly, the clouds had come quite low down.

The guide said it could not be done, but I said we must attempt it. I was eager, and had not felt the awful grip of the cold. We left the Nufenen on our left, a hopeless steep of new snow buried in fog, and we attacked the Gries. For half-an-hour we plunged on through snow above our knees, and my thin cotton clothes were soaked. So far the guide knew we were more or less on the path, and he went on and I panted after him. Neither of us spoke, but occasionally he looked back to make sure I had not dropped out.

The snow began to fall more quickly, and the wind had risen somewhat. I was afraid of another protest from the guide, but he stuck to it well, and I after him, continually plunging through soft snow and making yard after yard upwards. The snow fell more thickly and the wind still rose.

We came to a place which is, in the warm season, an alp; that is, a slope of grass, very steep but not terrifying; having here and there little precipices of rock breaking it into steps, but by no means (in summer) a matter to make one draw back. Now, however, when everything was still Arctic it was a very different matter. A sheer steep of snow whose downward plunge ran into the driving storm and was lost, whose head was lost in the same mass of thick cloud above, a slope somewhat hollowed and bent inwards, had to be crossed if we were to go any farther; and I was terrified, for I knew nothing of climbing. The guide said there was little danger, only if one slipped one might slide down to safety, or one might (much less probably) get over rocks and be killed. I was chattering a little with cold: but as he did not propose a return, I followed him. The surface was alternately slabs of frozen snow and patches of soft new snow. In the first he cut steps, and in the second we plunged, and once I went right in and a mass of snow broke off beneath me and went careering down the slope. He



showed me how to hold my staff backwards as he did his alpenstock and use it as a kind of brake in case I slipped.

We had been about twenty minutes crawling over that wall of snow and ice; and it was more and more apparent that we were in for danger. Before we had quite reached the far side, the wind was blowing a very full gale and roared past our ears. The surface snow was whirring furiously like dust before it: past our faces and against them drove the snowflakes, cutting the air; not falling, but making straight darts and streaks. They seemed like the form of the whistling wind: they blinded us. The rocks on the far side of the slope, rocks which had been our goal when we set out to cross it, had long ago disappeared in the increasing rush of the blizzard. Suddenly, as we were still painfully moving on, stooping against the mad wind, these rocks loomed up over as large as houses, and we saw them through the swarming snowflakes as great hulls are seen through a fog at sea. The guide crouched under the lee of the nearest; I came close up to him and he put his hands to my ear and shouted to me that nothing further could be done—he had so to shout because in among the rocks the hurricane made a roaring sound, swamping the voice.

I asked how far we were from the summit. He said he did not know where we were exactly, but that we could not be more than 800 feet from it. I was but that from Italy and I would not admit defeat. I offered him all I had in money to go on, but it was folly in me, because if I had had enough to tempt him and if he had yielded we should both have died. Luckily it was but a little sum. He shook his head. He would not go on, he broke out, for all the money there was in the world. He shouted me to eat and drink, and so we both did.

Then I understood his wisdom, for in a little while the cold began to seize me in my thin clothes. My hands were numb, my face already gave me intolerable pain, and my legs suffered and felt heavy. I learnt another thing (which had I been used to mountains I should have known) that it was not a simple thing to return. The guide was hesitating whether to stay in this rough shelter, or to face the chances of the descent. This terror had not crossed my mind, and I thought as little of it as I could,

needing my courage, and being near to breaking down from the intensity of the cold.

It seems that in a *tourmente* (for by that excellent name do the mountain people call such a storm) it is always a matter of doubt whether to halt or to go back. If you go back through it and lose your way, you are done for. If you halt in some shelter it may go on for two or three days, and then there is an end of you.

After a little he decided for a return, but he told me honestly what the chances were, and my sufferings from cold mercifully mitigated my fear. But even in that moment, I felt in a confused but very conscious way that I was defeated. I had crossed so many great hills and rivers, and pressed so well on my undeviating arrow-line to Rome, and I had charged this one great barrier manfully where the straight path of my pilgrimage crossed the Alps—and I had failed! Even in that fearful cold I felt it, and it ran through my doubt of return like another and deeper current of pain. Italy was there, just above, right to my hand. A lifting of a cloud, a little respite, and every downward step would have been towards the sunlight. As it was, I was being driven back northward, in retreat and ashamed. The Alps had conquered me.

Let us always after this combat their immensity and their will, and always hate the inhuman guards that hold the gates of Italy, and the powers that lie in wait for men on those high places. But now I know that Italy will always stand apart. She is cut off by no ordinary wall, and Death has all his army on her frontiers.

Hilaire Belloc.  
*The Path to Rome.*  
G. Allen and Co.

#### MRS. LE BLOND

[Mrs. Aubrey le Blond, the writer of these two passages on the guides and their heroism, is the most distinguished living lady climber. She is now the President of the Ladies' Alpine Club.]

A Tribute to  
the Guides  
from a Lady

THERE is no profession drawing its members from the peasant class which requires a combination of so many high and rare qualities as that of a mountain guide. Happily, the dwellers in

hill countries seem usually more noble in mind and robust of frame than the inhabitants of the plains, and all who know them well must admit that among Alpine guides are to be found men whose intelligence and character would rank high in any class of life.

I have usually noticed that the abilities and duties of a guide are little understood by the non-climber, who often imagines that a guide's sole business is to know the way and to carry the various useless articles which the beginner in mountaineering insists on taking with him.

Guiding, if it sometimes does include these duties, is far more than this. The first-class guide must be the general of the little army setting out to invade the higher regions. He need not *know* the way—in fact, it sometimes happens that he has never before visited the district—but he must be able to *find* a way, and a safe one, to the summit of the peak for which his party is bound. An inferior guide may know, from habit, the usual way up a mountain, but, should the conditions of ice and snow alter, he is unable to alter with them and vary his route. You may ask: ‘How does a guide find his way on a mountain new to him?’ There are several means open to him. If the peak is well known, say the Matterhorn, he will have heard from other guides which routes have been followed, and will know that if he desires to take his traveller up the ordinary way he must go past the Schwarze See Hotel, and on to the ridge which terminates in the Hörnli, making for the hut which he has seen from below through the telescope. Then he remembers that he must cross to the east face, and while doing so he will notice the scratches on the rocks from the nailed boots of the previous climbers. Now, mounting directly upwards, he will pick out the passages which seem easiest, until, passing the ruined upper hut, he comes out on to the ridge and looks down the tremendous precipice which overhangs the Matterhorn Glacier. This ridge, he knows, he simply has to follow until he reaches the foot of a steep face of rock some fifty feet high, down which hangs a chain. He has heard all about this bit of the climb since his boyhood, and he tells his traveller that, once on the top of the rock, all difficulty will be over, and the final slope to the summit

will be found a gentle one. So it comes to pass that the party reaches the highest pinnacle of the great mountain without once diverging from the best route. Occasionally, the leading guide may take with him as second guide a man from the locality, but most climbers will prefer to keep with them the two guides they are used to.

[Further on Mrs. Le Blond gives instances of guides' heroism.]

In trying to save a party which has fallen off a ridge, either by the breaking of a cornice or by a slip, I am told by first-rate guides that the proper thing to do is to jump straight out into the air on the opposite side. You thus bring a greater strain on the rope, and are more likely to check the pace at which your companions are sliding. I had a very awkward experience myself on one occasion when, owing to the softness of the snow, we started an avalanche, and the last guide, failing to spring over on the other side, we were all carried off our feet. Luckily, we were able, by thrusting our axes through into a lower and harder layer of snow, to arrest our wild career.

Piz Palü, in the Engadine, was once nearly the scene of a terrible tragedy through the breaking of a cornice, the party only being saved by the quickness and strength of one of their guides. The climbers consisted of Mrs. Wainright, her brother-in-law, Dr. B. Wainright, and the famous Pontresina guides Hans and Christian Grass. Bad weather overtook them during the ascent, and while they were passing along the ridge the fog was so thick that Hans Grass, who was leading, got on to the cornice. He was followed by the two travellers, and then with a mighty crack the cornice split asunder and precipitated them down the icy precipice seen to the right. Last on the rope came sturdy old Christian Grass, who grasped the awful situation in an instant, and sprang back. He held, but could, of course, do no more. Now was the critical time for the three hanging against the glassy wall. Both Hans and the lady had dropped their axes. Dr. Wainwright alone retained his, and to this the party owed their lives. Of course he, hanging at the top, could do nothing; but after shouting out his intentions to those below, he called on Hans to make ready to

catch the axe when it should slip by him. A moment of awful suspense, and the weapon was grasped by the guide, who forthwith hewed a big step out of the ice, and, standing on it, began the toilsome work of constructing a staircase back to the ridge. At last it was done, and when the three lay panting on the snow above, it was seen that by that time one strand only of the rope had remained intact.

Mrs. Aubrey le Blond.

*True Tales of Mountain Adventure.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

[One of Guido Rey's vivid and veracious impressions.]

I HAVE frequently observed that when the weather turns bad high up in the mountains, the guides become most ill-tempered. Those same guides who but a short time since were so obliging and so courteous, who were jesting with you, and treating you with so much deference, suddenly become rough and reserved, and at times even almost brutal. This is their way of showing you that matters are growing serious; there is no longer any need for courtesy when men's lives are at stake. They know that the only hope of safety lies in rapidity of flight, and they have no patience with him who goes slowly, or with him who argues or complains. On these occasions you feel them pulling with greater force, almost with violence, on the rope that unites you to them; they seize you roughly by the arm or the leg, if in your haste you are about to make a false step; they do not hesitate to rebuke you if, through inattention on your part, your rope catches round a piece of rock, or to tell you plainly that you are 'going' badly. You may be sure that when the guides resort to these home truths, there is no time to be lost. The guides' rough and violent nature has resumed its sway, but, to be candid, the amateur is no whit behindhand in this respect; I remember on that day returning with extraordinary animosity my guides' tugs at the rope. Fortunately these ill-humours disappear directly we are safe, and they leave no trace of rancour; on the contrary, they are replaced by an affectionate feeling of greater intimacy than before. During that time of difficulty a feeling of complete equality has arisen, raising the guides to the rank of amateur and making the amateur not inferior to his

More about  
Guides

guides. And when the goal is reached, let one of them only tell you that you have 'gone' well, and your anger is appeased, and the gloom of wounded *amour propre* disappears completely.

*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

### IN DEFENCE

In Defence of  
Mountain-  
eering

[I have thrown together here a number of passages in defence of their favourite sport culled from the works of various climbers.

This passage is culled from an article by Mr. J. G. Dodson, M.P., P.C., afterwards Lord Monk Bretton, in the second series of *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*, those early volumes which laid the foundations of modern Alpine literature. It gives the defence of the early climbers—a daring set of men who conquered the Alps in a generation—against the many diverse attacks on their sport in the daily and weekly Press of that time. The Press has now come round, and is quite hardened, if even not indifferent, to Alpine accidents.

Mr. Dodson argues his matter well when he puts against the loss side of the account the profit side—in the great gain to health and vitality.]

By an Early  
Climber

ALPINE perils there no doubt are—let there be no mistake nor illusion on this head—and these are no more to be despised or trifled with, particularly by the inexperienced, than are the dangers of the ocean. Winds and waves, rocks and shoals, however, are not held as furnishing sufficient reasons for consigning a yachtsman to Bedlam. The use of Alpine expeditions is of a similar character with that of a run across a stiff country—of a cruise at sea—of a hard day on the moors—or of many other exercises in which Englishmen indulge unrebuked. It braces the muscles, steadies the nerve, gives readiness to the eye, hand, and foot, and fresh health and vigour to the whole frame. All, however, in a higher degree. Neither the breeze of the Atlantic, nor the clear air of the desert, nor the bracing atmosphere of the Scotch hills or English downs, can vie for one instant with the inspiriting, life-giving breath of the glacier. I speak from experience. I had been a good deal out of health, and not a little out of spirits, for two years. I had tried hard work—I had tried relaxation from all work—I had tried hygiene, orthodox medicine, and heretical cures. Nothing would do. In the autumn of 1859 I was persuaded to

try Switzerland. It did not cure me, but it effected much. Before I left England it was pain and grief to crawl up a Malvern hill. Before I had been six weeks in Switzerland I made the ascent of Mont Blanc, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

Rt. Hon. J. G. Dodson, M.P.  
*Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.*

[Owen Glynne Jones was a great climber, with an almost super-human faculty for climbing. He could literally hang on to a rock with his digits, and I have seen him ascend, in the absence of other recreation, the wall of a hotel by the cracks. This passage contains his reasoned defence of a sport which was with him a passion that led to his death.]

CLIMBING satisfies many needs; the love of the beautiful in nature; the desire to exert oneself physically, which with strong men is a passionate craving that must find satisfaction somehow or other; the joy of conquest without any woe to the conquered; the prospect of continual increase in one's skill, and the hope that this skill may partially neutralise the failing in strength that comes with advancing age or ill health.

By Later  
Climbers:

(1) Owen  
Glynne Jones

Hunting and fishing enthrall many men, but mountaineering does not claim the sacrifice of beasts and fishes. Cricket and football are magnificent sports, and it is a perpetual satisfaction that the British races are becoming enthusiastic in their appreciation of keen contests in these games. Yet there is something repulsive in the spectacle of five thousand inactive spectators of a struggling twenty-two, and the knowledge that the main interest of many players and observers is of a monetary character does not tend to convince one of the moral benefits that these sports can offer. On the other hand, it is scarcely fair to judge a sport by those who degrade it in this manner, and we all know that genuine cricketers and footballers play for love and honour.

The mountaineer does not reap any golden harvest by his exertions—even if he writes a book on his subject. He does not exhibit his skill to applauding thousands; and his vanity is rarely tickled by the praise of many. He must be content with the sport itself and what it offers him directly.

Owen Glynne Jones.

*Rock Climbing in the English Lake District.*

By kind permission of Messrs. G. Abraham and Sons.



(2) Mr.  
Norman  
Neruda

Above all and every sport I place mountaineering; what sport is there equal to it? The mountaineer in pursuit of his passion—always considering him to be a true mountaineer and not that type of climber who is wrongly looked upon as a mountaineer by an ignorant public—is brought into closer and more intimate contact with the glories and mysteries of Nature than is the fortune of the followers of any other sport; and apart from its great health- and strength-giving qualities, I know of no other pursuit so well calculated to raise the moral and artistic tone of human nature by bringing into play all the better qualities of a man's character—self-reliance, patience, unselfishness, courage and presence of mind—to name a few, and by awakening in even the dullest a perception of the artistic and beautiful everywhere surrounding him.

*The Climbs of Norman Neruda.*  
T. Fisher Urwin.

(3) Mr.  
Mummery

THE true mountaineer is a wanderer, and by a wanderer I do not mean a man who expends his whole time in travelling to and fro in the mountains on the exact tracks of his predecessors—much as a bicyclist rushes along the turnpike roads of England—but I mean a man who loves to be where no human being has been before, who delights in gripping rocks that have previously never felt the touch of human fingers, or in hewing his way up ice-filled gullies whose grim shadows have been sacred to the mists and avalanches since 'Earth rose out of chaos.' In other words, the true mountaineer is the man who attempts new ascents. Equally, whether he succeeds or fails, he delights in the fun and jollity of the struggle. The gaunt, bare slabs, the square, precipitous steps in the ridge, and the black, bulging ice of the gully, are the very breath of life to his being. I do not pretend to be able to analyse this feeling, still less to be able to make it clear to unbelievers. It must be felt to be understood, but it is potent to happiness and sends the blood tingling through the veins, destroying every trace of cynicism and striking at the very roots of pessimistic philosophy.

Our critics, curiously enough, repeat in substance Mr. Ruskin's original taunt, that we regard the mountains as greased poles. I must confess that a natural and incurable denseness of understanding does not enable me to feel the sting of this taunt. Putting

aside the question of grease, which is offensive and too horrible for contemplation in its effects on knickerbockers—worse even than the structure-destroying edges and splinters of the Grépon ridge—I do not perceive the enormity or sin of climbing poles. At one time, I will confess, I took great delight in the art, and, so far as my experience extends, the taste is still widespread amongst English youths. It is possible, nay even probable, that much of the pleasure of mountaineering is derived from the actual physical effort and from the perfect state of health to which this effort brings its votaries, and, to this extent, may plausibly be alleged to be the mere sequence and development of the pole and tree climbing of our youth. The sting of the taunt is presumably meant to lurk in the implication that the climber is incapable of enjoying noble scenery; that, in the jargon of certain modern writers, he is a ‘mere gymnast.’ But why should a man be assumed incapable of enjoying æsthetic pleasures because he is also capable of the physical and non-æsthetic pleasures of rock climbing?

*My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

Now there are yet various reasons which make keen physical exertion not merely necessary for our muscular and animal system, but essential also to our moral nature. Our high material civilisation is always tending towards the point where it might annihilate those mundane conditions which make the human powers what they are. Our intellects—nay, our very virtues, would ere long rot or run to seed were the necessity for effort—were all effort banished from the world. The human race will be drawing towards a bad end when no one ever runs any risks or fatigues, no one ever feels too hot or too weary, and never sees a fellow-being in want of a strong arm and resolute self-sacrifice. Nothing can be more false than the silly old quibble, that an increase of cultivation takes the manhood and heart out of the advancing generations. But there would soon be truth in this venerable lie, if it were to turn out that increased cultivation made the sterner qualities of manhood superfluous and obsolete. So long as this planet remains what it is, there will always come times in a man’s life when he needs for himself and for others that reasonable disregard of pain and of life,

(4) A  
Philosopher

that insensibility to physical privation, that lightning readiness of hand and eye, that dogged temper of endurance which men have called manliness ever since the days of the Trojan war. Now these things cannot be learned without some practice, and cannot always be practised at a given moment or place. They need much habitual use, at times the most unexpected, and in ways the most perplexing. To seek after these occasions, to hazard something for them within the judgment of a considerate mind, is a very desirable and indeed essential purpose in these times, and very worthy of the rational man. Hence it is that our time-honoured field-sports and manly games, even if risking something occasionally to life and limb (within the limits of cool sense) are not excusable only, but actively meritorious — not pleasant merely, but positively virtuous ; for by them the sap of man is kept up fresh and pure, and the fibres of our nerves as tough as ever was that of our forefathers.

But, in truth, to decry Alpine climbing as foolhardiness is both very ignorant and very perverse. Its supposed dangers are mere visions of the benighted lowlander. Its real risks are indeed small to the skilful and prudent man. The foolhardy blunderer will find dangers in a street crossing. The accidents in the Alps are nothing to those of the hunting-field, and even of the moor. Far more men die of gunshot wounds in a month than fall into crevasses in a season. No doubt the Alpine accidents, when they do happen, are of a very frightful kind. But a man may as well be killed beneath a precipice one thousand feet high as at the bottom of a fenced ditch. Of course, if careless or unpractised persons attempt what skilful climbers can do with ease, they will probably come to a bad end. On this point only serious warning is needed :—once let it be universally understood that to climb glaciers requires special habit, like fencing or skating, and accidents will be scarcely heard of. No one but a fool starts to ride in a steeplechase if he has never taken a gate, or goes out to a battue if he has never handled a gun ; but many a man who has never seen ice, except on a pond, jauntily thinks that what A, B, and C can do he can do much better, and goes like a fool to risk his own and his companion's neck on a difficult *arête*. Such men must be told that

ice-climbing requires some special training of hand, foot, eye, and nerve. With these, and reasonable forethought, a healthy man may go anywhere and do anything. Without them all the courage and strength in the world are of no use, and may only bring a man to a painful and unhonoured end. But the man, who, diligently training himself for what he has to do, takes all the measures which a man of sense would, may fairly give full rein to his energies and his fancies in the Alps, and know that he is following some of the best emotions of our nature, and testing some of the most useful qualities we have, without committing any folly of which a wise man need be ashamed, or incurring any risk but that inseparable from every keen exercise whether of nerve or limb.

Less dangerous than many, more exhilarating than most, and nobler than any other form of physical training, Alpine climbing may surely be *proved to demonstration* to be the best of the modes by which we may refresh, as we must, our jaded animal and sensuous systems. Fighting with mankind in all its modes, real or mimic, has long been set down as a brutalising outlet for our animal energies. The destruction of animals, or all forms of the chase, will soon, we believe, be discredited on somewhat similar grounds. There remains the better right, the true scope for our combative capacities, the battle with the earth, the old struggle with the elements and the seasons. To know this strange and beautiful earth as it is, to bask from time to time in its loveliness, to feel the mere free play of life and happiness in the great world of sense, to wrestle with it from time to time in its might, is not the most ignoble occupation of its rational denizens.

Frederic Harrison.

*My Alpine Jubilee.*

Smith, Elder and Co.

It has already been said that man loves to climb unknown peaks, because by attaining their summit he achieves a conquest, he takes possession of a new part of his domain. This is not vainglory, but a profound instinct of our nature. (5) An Observer

With this very general motive is mingled a yet more powerful one. Aspiring as he does unceasingly to an ideal which he never attains, a promised peak beguiles him for a moment, and deceives him in his need by giving a goal to his hopes. The higher, the

giddier, the more difficult it is, the more closely the peak approaches that ideal which for ever escapes him.

By a deep and irresistible instinct man loves to rise, to mount—to mount unceasingly. That is the reason why the climber secretly always prefers the highest peak, unless he prefers the most slender peak, the freest in space, the one that has least connection with the earth. Two voices are heard very distinctly on the border of a precipice and close to a lofty summit. One is human, speaking of fatigue and fear; the other is superhuman and cries, 'Onward, higher and higher still! you must reach the top.'

Happy is man when he can indulge his infinite aspiration up to the last, and when in the very heart of his triumph a secret deception forbids him to perceive that he is still deceived.

Climber, who after victory love to meditate over hours spent on the highest peaks, tell me—have you not more than once felt what I have told you?

Emile Javelle.

*Alpine Memories.*

(Trans. by W. H. Chesson.)

T. Fisher Unwin.

### A GIDDY CLIMB

[The Pelmo (10,395 feet high) is a lofty and picturesque mountain in the Italian Tyrol. It appears difficult, but is now really quite easy. I give this as a charming and faithful description of the climb as it was. The ledge has been 'improved.']

#### The Climb of the Pelmo

ABOVE the first 150 feet a narrow gully disclosed itself, which led us to higher and more broken rocks. Then, again, the wall looked perfectly smooth, upright, and unassailable. On the last place where it could have found room to rest was a low pile of stones. Standing beside it, we began for the first time to comprehend the key to our dilemma; we were now to turn altogether to the left, and to attempt the formidable task of traversing the face of the Pelmo. Our pathway was before us, a horizontal ledge or groove, at present a few feet broad, shortly narrowing so as to afford only sufficient standing-ground, threatening before long not to do even this. The cliffs around us bent into deep recesses, and each time a projecting angle was reached the side of the bay seen opposite appeared wholly smooth and impassable.

This portion of the ascent of the Pelmo is, in my limited experience, one of the most impressive, and at the same time enjoyable, positions in which a climber can find himself. Even a sluggish imagination has here enough to stimulate it. The mysterious pathway, unseen from a short distance, seems to open for the mountaineer's passage, and to close up again behind him as he advances. The stones he dislodges, after two or three long bounds, disappear with a whirr into a sheer depth of seething mist, of which the final far-off crash reveals the immensity. The overhanging rocks above, the absence of any resting-place even for the eye below, do not allow him for a moment to forget that the crags to which he clings form part of one of the wildest precipices in Europe.

To walk for a mile or so along a ledge no broader than the sill which runs underneath the top-story windows of a London square, with, for twice the height of St. Paul's cross above the pavement, no shelf below wide enough to arrest your fall, must sound an alarming feat to any one, except perhaps a professional burglar. And yet to a head naturally free from giddiness, and to nerves moderately hardened by mountain experiences, the full sense of the majesty of the situation need not be disturbed by physical fear. The animal 'homo scandens' is not in the slightest danger. His pedestal may be scanty, but it is sufficient, he can follow his chamois-hunter amongst the abysses with as much confidence as Dante followed the elder poet amidst the boiling gulfs of Tartarus.

Douglas Freshfield.

*The Italian Alps.*

Longmans, Green and Co.

## A PIONEER

[Guido Rey's defence of the passion for 'First Ascents.']

I WAS envious when I thought that he had not felt the peace of mind, the freedom from anxiety, that were ours that day. And yet the mountain had not changed since then; the same difficulties, the same perils awaited me on the same route. But the circumstances were altered for me; when the enigma is solved the sphinx dies. Let a man but know that one of his fellows has succeeded in

'First  
Ascents'

performing any action, and that action appears less difficult. The real merit is his who first does the deed ; but he himself, in doing it, makes it possible for others, and therefore less noble. The anxieties and the bold enterprise of the artist who creates are replaced by the mental calm and the slavish security of the imitator. And if it comes to pass that some one else repeats the deed, even though he bring it to greater perfection, he will not earn either the glory or the joy of the first. This is my first small contribution to the much discussed Alpine theme as to the value of 'first ascents.'

Guido Rey.

*The Matterhorn.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

### CRISES

[Concerning the ugly moments of mountaineering.]

'Pin-pricks' BUT where is the climber to whom the petty discomforts of such moments are unknown? The man below impatiently urges you to descend, while the one above protests that you are pulling him down ; the rope of the party becomes entangled with the ropes that are fixed to the rocks, it becomes twisted by the damp and stiff with the frost ; it hitches everywhere, winds round your legs, compresses your chest, rubs against your face. Everything gets in the way : your sack will not keep in its place, your camera catches at regular intervals, your coat impedes your movements—the very brim of your hat is troublesome. The axe is a real plague: you have tied it on to your arm with a piece of string in order to have your hands free, and it swings about on every side, turns upside down, smites your shins, squeezes your wrist or wounds your face ; at times it hurts you so much that you cry out, and you are minded to abuse it as if it were a human being. It seems to be doing all this on purpose to aggravate the position of affairs just when they are at their worst ; you could almost throw it away. With the axe it is as with certain friends ; you wish to have them at your side in case of need ; but when that is past, the first time they cause you any annoyance you weary of them, and in your short-sighted human egoism you do not reflect that you may shortly need them again.

Guido Rey.

*The Matterhorn.*

T. Fisher Unwin.



## 'FAREWELL!'

[This is a dramatic passage. It was written by Mr. Mummery before he started to the Himalayas, where he perished on Nanga Parbat. He sailed a week after the publication of the book.]

HIGH proficiency in the sport is only attainable when a natural **Ave Cæsar!** aptitude is combined with long years of practice, and not without some, perhaps much, danger to life and limb. Happily, the faithful climber usually acquires this skill at an age when the responsibilities of life have not yet laid firm hold upon him, and when he may fairly claim some latitude in matters of this sort. On the other hand he gains a knowledge of himself, a love of all that is most beautiful in nature, and an outlet such as no other sport affords for the stirring energies of youth; gains for which no price is, perhaps, too high. It is true the great ridges sometimes demand their sacrifice, but the mountaineer would hardly forego his worship though he knew himself to be the destined victim. But happily to most of us the great brown slabs bending over into immeasurable space, the lines and curves of the wind-moulded cornice, the delicate undulations of the fissured snow, are old and trusted friends, ever luring us to health and fun and laughter, and enabling us to bid a sturdy defiance to all the ills that time and life oppose.

Mummery.

*My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

## IV

## THE ALPS IN TRAGEDY

[THE American poet, Longfellow, always had a great heart for the mountains. No Swiss collection would be complete without his famous 'Excelsior,' though it is perhaps rather ethical than Alpine. No experienced climber could approve the behaviour of the hero in 'Excelsior' or feel any astonishment at his fate.]

A Famous  
Tragedy

THE shades of night were falling fast,  
As through an Alpine village passed  
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,  
A banner with the strange device,  
Excelsior !

His brow was sad ; his eye beneath  
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,  
And like a silver clarion rung  
The accents of that unknown tongue,  
Excelsior !

In happy homes he saw the light  
Of household fires gleam warm and bright ;  
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,  
And from his lips escaped a groan,  
Excelsior !

'Try not the Pass !' the old man said ;  
'Dark lowers the tempest overhead,  
The roaring torrent is deep and wide !'  
And loud that clarion voice replied,  
Excelsior !

'O stay' the maiden said, 'and rest  
Thy weary head upon this breast !'  
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,  
But still he answered, with a sigh,  
Excelsior !

'Beware the pine-tree's withered branch !  
Beware the awful avalanche !'  
This was the peasant's last Good-night,  
A voice replied, far up the height,  
Excelsior !

At break of day, as heavenward  
The pious monks of Saint Bernard  
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,  
A voice cried through the startled air,  
Excelsior !

A traveller, by the faithful hound,  
Half-buried in the snow was found,  
Still grasping in his hand of ice  
That banner with the strange device,  
Excelsior !

There in the twilight cold and grey,  
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,  
And from the sky, serene and far,  
A voice fell, like a falling star,  
Excelsior !

Longfellow.

### THE GREATEST TRAGEDY

[I have put together here all the great passages about the famous accident on the Matterhorn (14,705 feet high)—a tragedy which, like so many other tragedies, came at the moment of victory. That was the reason, perhaps, why it struck the imagination of the world, and is still remembered as the greatest of Alpine accidents.

To understand the full meaning of the Matterhorn disaster, we must realise that in 1865 there were three competitors striving after the great prize of setting foot first on the summit of the Matterhorn

—Professor Tyndall, the Italian Giordano, and Edward Whymper. Guido Rey, the famous Italian climber, for the first time fully explains the tactics of the Italian rival. Those tactics were to deprive Whymper of his guides. Carrel was actually detached; and Whymper was apparently beaten. But at Zermatt he fell in with Lord Francis Douglas, a brilliant young climber, fresh from the conquest of the Gabelhorn, whose guide, Taugwalder, had just reconnoitred the Hörnli ridge of the Matterhorn and brought the 'good news' that it was 'probably possible.' Whymper and Lord Francis readily agreed to join in an attempt. It was at that moment that an English party, consisting of the Rev. C. Hudson, a competent mountaineer, and one of the earlier Alpine Club men, and a young Mr. Hadow, a novice in the Alps, arrived at Zermatt. Their guide was Whymper's old companion, Michel Croz, one of the best climbers then living. They announced in the hotel their intention of starting for the Matterhorn next morning. Whymper and Lord Francis consulted and agreed that 'it was undesirable that two independent parties should be on the mountain at the same time.' It was agreed that they should join forces. The party thus constituted was too large and not in any way qualified to make a first ascent, especially of so formidable a mountain as the Matterhorn. Yet it achieved success, and might with fair luck have escaped disaster. The Italians, repulsed in a strenuous attack, heard the shouts of the visitors on the summit. Forty-eight hours later they reached it themselves from the Breuil side.]

**The Matter-  
horn Accident  
(1) Whymper's  
Arrival**

Now Edward Whymper came upon the scene. Into the bullring under the burning sun, before thousands of eager spectators, the *espada* steps forth eager and brave; the eyes of all are fixed on him. The arena is now empty; the bull alone waits him in the centre of the circus, motionless, with horns erect. The struggle is to be terrible, unceasing, full of daring stratagems; one of the two must fall. The *espada* scans the monster and strides up to him with resolute gait. Now is the critical moment.

In the same way Whymper appeared in the majestic amphitheatre of mountains, among which the Matterhorn rears his dark head aloft in sign of defiance. Here too, as in the arena at Seville, it is not the bull which seeks the encounter: the man attacks, the bull defends himself, dies or kills; and in the duel the Matterhorn had all the material advantages of its enormous strength, of its fits of brutal rage; the man's weapon was his iron will.

The history of the contest between this man, young, strong, and confident, and the hoary, cold, and unresponsive rock is perhaps one of the finest and most telling in the whole history of mountaineering, and apart from mountaineering, it is not an unimportant episode in the hard-won conquest of unknown territory.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin,

[This is a letter written by Giordano to his friend a few days before the accident.]

WHYMPER had arrived two or three days before; as usual he wished to make the ascent, and had engaged Carrel, who, not having yet had my letters, had agreed, but for a few days only. Fortunately the weather turned bad. Whympers was unable to make his fresh attempt, and Carrel left him and came with me, together with five other picked men who are the best guides in the valley. We immediately sent off our advance guard with Carrel at its head. In order not to excite remark we took the rope and other materials to Avouil, a hamlet which is very remote and close to the Matterhorn, and this is to be our lower base. Out of six men, four are to work up above, and two will act continuously as porters, a task which is at least as difficult as the other.

(2) Giordano's  
Letter:  
Revealing  
His Strategy

I had taken up my quarters at Breuil for the time being. The weather, the god whom we fear and on whom all will depend, has hitherto been very changeable and rather bad. As lately as yesterday morning it was snowing on the Matterhorn, but yesterday evening it cleared. In the night the men started with the tents, and I hope that by this time they will have reached a great height: but the weather is turning misty again, and the Matterhorn is still covered; I hope the mists will soon disperse. Weather permitting, I hope in three or four days to know how I stand. Carrel told me not to come up yet, until he should send me word; naturally he wishes to personally make sure of the last bits. As seen from here they do not seem to me to be absolutely inaccessible, but, before saying that, one must try them, and it is also necessary to ascertain whether we can bivouac at a point much higher than Whympers's highest. As soon as I have any good news I will send a message to St.

Vincent, the nearest telegraph office, with a telegram containing a few words, and do you then come at once. Meanwhile, on receipt of the present, please send me a few lines in reply, with some advice, because I am head over ears in difficulty here, what with the weather, the expense, and Whympers.

I have tried to keep everything secret, but that fellow, whose life seems to depend on the Matterhorn, is here, prying into everything. I have taken all the competent men away from him, and yet he is enamoured of this mountain that he may go up with others and make a scene. He is here, in this hotel, and I try to avoid speaking to him.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
 T. Fisher Unwin.

(3) The  
 Accident

MICHEL CROZ had laid aside his axe, and in order to give Mr. Hadow greater security was absolutely taking hold of his legs, and putting his feet one by one into their proper positions. So far as I know, no one was actually descending. I cannot speak with certainty, because the two leading men were partially hidden from my sight by an intervening mass of rock, but it is my belief, from the movements of their shoulders, that Croz, having done as I said, was in the act of turning round, to go down a step or two himself; at this moment Mr. Hadow slipped, fell against him, and knocked him over. I heard one startled exclamation from Croz, then saw him and Mr. Hadow flying downwards; in another moment Hudson was dragged from his steps, and Lord F. Douglas immediately after him. All this was the work of a moment. Immediately we heard Croz's exclamation, old Peter and I planted ourselves as firmly as the rocks would permit: the rope was taut between us, and the jerk came on us both as on one man. We held; but the rope broke midway between Taugwalder and Lord Francis Douglas. For a few seconds we saw our unfortunate companions sliding downwards on their backs, and spreading out their hands, endeavouring to save themselves. They passed from our sight uninjured, disappeared one by one, and fell from precipice to precipice on to the Matterhorn-gletscher below, a distance of nearly 4,000 feet in height. From the moment the rope broke it was impossible to help them.

So perished our comrades! For the space of half an hour we remained on the spot without moving a single step. The two men, paralysed by terror, cried like infants, and trembled in such a manner as to threaten us with the fate of the others. Old Peter rent the air with exclamations of 'Chamounix! Oh, what will Chamounix say?' He meant, who would believe that Croz could fall? The young man did nothing but scream or sob, 'We are lost! we are lost!' Fixed between the two, I could neither move up nor down. I begged young Peter to descend, but he dared not. Unless he did we could not advance. Old Peter became alive to the danger, and swelled the cry, 'We are lost! we are lost!' The father's fear was natural—he trembled for his son; the young man's fear was cowardly—he thought of self alone. At last old Peter summoned up courage, and changed his position to a rock to which he could fix the rope; the young man then descended, and we all stood together. Immediately we did so I asked for the rope which had given way, and found, to my surprise—indeed to my horror—that it was the weakest of the three ropes. It was not brought, and should not have been employed, for the purpose for which it was used. It was old rope, and, compared with the others, was feeble. It was intended as a reserve in case we had to leave much rope behind, attached to the rocks. I saw at once that a serious question was involved, and made him give me the end. It had broken in mid-air, and it did not appear to have sustained previous injury.

For more than two hours afterwards I thought almost every moment that the next would be my last; for the Taugwalders, utterly unnerved, were not only incapable of giving assistance, but were in such a state that a slip might have been expected from them at any moment. After a time we were able to do that which should have been done at first, and fixed rope to firm rocks, in addition to being tied together. These ropes were cut from time to time, and were left behind. Even with their assurance the men were afraid to proceed, and several times old Peter turned with ashy face and faltering limbs, and said, with terrible emphasis, '*I cannot!*'

About 6 P.M. we arrived at the snow upon the ridge descending towards Zermatt, and all peril was over. We frequently looked, but in vain, for traces of our unfortunate companions; we bent over



the ridge and cried to them, but no sound returned. Convinced at last that they were neither within sight nor hearing, we ceased from our useless efforts, and, too cast down for speech, silently gathered up our things, and the little effects of those who were lost, preparatory to continuing the descent; when lo! a mighty arch appeared, rising above the Lyskamm, high into the sky. Pale, colourless, and noiseless, but perfectly sharp and defined, except where it was lost in the clouds, this unearthly apparition seemed like a vision from another world; and, almost appalled, we watched with amazement the gradual development of two vast crosses, one on either side. If the Taugwalders had not been the first to perceive it, I should have doubted my senses. They thought it had some connection with the accident, and I, after a while, that it might bear some relation to ourselves. But our movements had no effect upon it. The spectral forms remained motionless. It was a fearful and wonderful sight; unique in my experience, and impressive beyond description, coming at such a moment.

E. Whymper.

*Scrambles amongst the Alps.*

John Murray.

(4) Zermatt in  
Tears

ZERMATT was in tears. The black flag seen by Giordano on the snow at the top was at that very time a signal of misfortune. An unheard-of disaster had stained the fair record of the Englishman's victory with an indelible blot of sorrow.

How this happened is well known: Whymper had left the Jomein in a very excited state; his repeated failures on the mountain, the remembrance perchance of the day on which the Matterhorn had chastised him even to the drawing of his blood, the fear lest all his efforts were soon to prove fruitless—all these things agitated him. The thought that Carrel was up aloft, approaching the summit step by step, and his anger at that which he considered a betrayal, committed him heart and soul to the struggle from which he meant to issue the victor at any cost.

He had thought himself the Matterhorn's master; thenceforth the Matterhorn was the master of him.

The first link in the fatal chain of circumstances which were to lead him up to the catastrophe was the arrival of Douglas; when

he reached Zermatt fate willed that he should find Michel Croz here, on the point of attempting the ascent ; with the latter were Messrs. Hudson and Hadow. Whymper, content if only he might have Croz with him, admitted them all to a share in his expedition, as he had already admitted Douglas ; and so these four brave men, who were nearly all unknown to one another, were joined together to attempt to conquer one of the hardest peaks in the Alps.

The same evening everything was settled ; they were to start immediately, the very next day. Croz and old Peter Taugwalder and his son were to be the guides ; and Whymper, during a sleepless night, marvelled at the strange fate which had brought him once more into the company of his faithful Michel Croz, and at the hasty march of events, from Carrel's desertion to the meeting with Hudson and the others, and perchance he asked himself in the night how it would all end.

Two days after they had conquered the Matterhorn, and on the summit, where no man had yet stood, the brave Croz's blue shirt waved, a modest but glorious standard. The victory had not been a difficult one ; but on the descent, when they were barely an hour from the summit and were all on the rope, Hadow slipped and fell on Croz, who was in front of him. Croz, who was unprepared, was unable to withstand the shock ; they both fell and pulled down Hudson and Douglas.

On hearing Croz's shout Whymper and Taugwalder clasped the rocks ; they stood firm, perhaps they might have held up their companions, but the rope broke. Whymper saw them slide down the slope, trying with convulsive hands to stop themselves, and then falling from rock to rock and finally disappearing over the edge of the precipice.

It was all over in a second ! The great victory was turned into an overwhelming disaster. The torn and mangled bodies were soon after picked up at the foot of the mountain, on the Matterhorn glacier, 1,300 feet below the spot from which they fell, and buried in a small tomb in the Zermatt cemetery. Douglas alone was never found. His body remained up on the mountain, mysteriously hidden among the mighty rocks.

The news of the catastrophe gave rise to an universal cry of

horror. Of all Alpine disasters, not one, not even of those which had a larger number of victims, ever moved men's minds as this one did. The whole of Europe talked of it; the English papers discussed it with bitter words of blame; Italian papers invented a tale of a rock detaching itself from the summit, and sweeping the helpless victims to destruction, or of a hidden crevasse opening wide its terrible jaws to swallow them. An intelligent German published to the world a newspaper article in which Whymper was accused of cutting the rope between Douglas and Taugwalder, at the critical moment, to save his own life. Gustave Doré made a fantastic, terrible drawing to illustrate the catastrophe. The superstitious mountain folk whispered among themselves, foolishly reminding one another of the unlucky dates of the enterprise; the 13th for the start, a Friday for the victory.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

(5) The  
Monument

FROM the window of my room in the Monte Rosa Hotel at Zermatt I can see the Matterhorn. Lightly veiled by the mists which rise from the valley in the afternoon heat, the mountain takes on so aerial an appearance, so transparent a tint, that it looks unnaturally high and distant; it resembles a cloud, or a cone of light smoke, rather than a rock. My glance descends upon the modest tower of the church near the hotel, the old tower with its pointed gable and its cleft wooden top, through which one can see the little bells. It was they that rang for the funeral of Croz. Croz lies in the peaceful cemetery in the shadow of the church. 'He lost his life not far from this spot,' says the inscription carved on a headstone; 'he died like a brave man and a faithful guide.' Not far from him lie side by side two of his employers, Hudson and Hadow.

That little plot of soil which contains, together with other victims of the mountains, the first victims of the Matterhorn, fills me with deep emotion every time I visit it; I think of the eternal peace which has followed upon the hours of fierce struggle; I grieve for those young men torn so early in their lives from the enjoyment of their noble pleasures, and then I wonder whether it were not a

blessed thing to die as they died, quickly, unexpectedly, painlessly, in a moment of perfect peace, when life seemed full of beauty, and the mind was purified by passion and by joy.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
 T. Fisher Unwin.

'Intanto voce fu, per me, udita : Onorate l'altissimo Poeta : L'ombra sua torna, ch'era dipartita.'	'A voice called me, saying ; Honour the great poet, whose shadow was hidden from us for a time, but has come again.'
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I WAS descending from the Theodul. Half-way between the Col (6) *The Man* and the Jomein I saw coming slowly up towards me a fine, tall old man, with a ruddy countenance, clean-shaven, clear-eyed, and with snow-white hair. His face bore the impress of an iron will ; his body, straight as a dart notwithstanding his years, was full of vigour ; his long, rhythmical gait testified to his familiarity with mountains. As I passed him, I took off my hat to him, as is the polite custom of those who meet in the mountains. He returned my bow and passed on. My guide had stopped to talk to his. When he rejoined me he whispered, 'Do you know who that is?' I answered that I did not. 'Monsieur Whympier!' and he pronounced the name in a tone of respect. I was as much moved as if I were in the presence of a ghost. I had never seen Whympier except in photographs. I at once turned round to look at him. He had stopped too, and was looking at the Matterhorn, whose aspect was one of marvellous grandeur from this point.

I cannot describe how much I was impressed by that meeting in that spot. It was not a man I saw, but the idealised image of the perfect mountaineer, whom I and others have so often dreamed of imitating. They were there, the Matterhorn and Whympier, the two great rivals, and the sight of them in each other's presence brought home to one the superiority of the tiny conqueror to the conquered giant. He had come back after thirty years to see once more the mountain that had made him famous. He found none of his former comrades there. Croz lay at Zermatt, Carrel at Valtournanche; only the Matterhorn stood unchangeable everlasting. He was looking at it, and was perhaps recalling the deeds of daring

he had performed on the stubborn peak in the vigour of his youthful years.

I watched, without his noticing it, and with a kind of veneration, that man who had not feared the Matterhorn when the Matterhorn was a mystery, and who loved it still though the crowd had made it commonplace. I saw his snow-white hair flowing beneath the brim of his grey felt hat, and it seemed to me that it must have begun to turn white on the terrible day of victory and disaster. I myself was harrowed by the thought of what he must have suffered on that day and afterwards. The Matterhorn had cost him dear ! It was not, however, the struggle with the mountain that had saddened him, but the contest with his fellow-men which followed his victory.

I would fain have made some sign, have shown him some act of reverence, some proof of my sympathetic interest ; have told him that I had read his book again and again, that it had done me good, because it had brought me also up into those places. I would have told him that I understood and shared his passion ; that I also, though speaking a different language from his, was a worshipper of the mountain for which he had done and suffered so much ; have cried out to him that I too had attempted new ways up the mountain, and that I had not succeeded ; have asked him for his iron will that I might try again some day and be successful, and be able to write and tell him that I also had in some measure conquered the Matterhorn.

Whymper started again and slowly continued his ascent, and I was left with my wish unsatisfied. But I too shall return in my old age to the foot of the Matterhorn. I shall struggle up step by step, leaning on my now useless axe, to these dear haunts, seeking comfort in the contemplation of the familiar peaks. I shall enjoy the final pleasures of Alpine life, the cool spring that quenches thirst, the refreshing cup of warm milk, the colour of a little flower, a breath of the wholesome odour of pines wafted up by the winds from the neighbouring forest, the silvery sound of bells which rises in the evening from the peaceful pastures. On the way I shall find my old guides, once my companions in the happy days of strenuous effort, and I shall stop to talk with them, and to recall old memories.

Seated on the hotel terrace in the pleasant mountain sunshine I shall look out down the valley, over the long basin of the Breuil, for the arrival of parties of climbers. Young men will appear, full of courage and hope. Perhaps Fasano, the faithful waiter at the Jomein, will point me out to them, and say: 'That gentleman over there was a great climber in his day: he has passed many a night up on the mountain here.' The young men will look at me incredulously while I shall straighten my bent back, at the prompting of my last shreds of vanity; and I shall take aside those who are kind enough to listen to me, and bare my arm like a veteran of many battles, to show them secretly an old wound received up in the mountains, and shall encourage them to make attempts and exhort them to be prudent. Then I shall be content if I note in them traces of the emotion I felt the first time I saw the Matterhorn.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

[It may be interesting to add here Ruskin's reflections on this accident.]

A PASSAGE in the eighty-fifth page of this book, referring to Alpine travels, will fall harshly on the reader's ear, since it has been sorrowfully enforced by the deaths on Mont Cervin. I leave it, nevertheless, as it stood, for I do not now write unadvisedly, and think it wrong to cancel what has once been thoughtfully said; but it must not so remain without a few added words.

No blame ought to attach to the Alpine tourist for incurring danger. There is usually sufficient cause, and real reward, for all difficult work; and even were it otherwise, some experience of distinct peril, and the acquirement of habits of quick and calm action in its presence, are necessary elements, at some period of life, in the formation of manly character. The blame of bribing guides into danger is a singular accusation, in behalf of a people who have made mercenary soldiers of themselves for centuries, without any one's thinking of giving their fidelity better employment; though, indeed, the piece of work they did at the gate of the Tuileries, however useless, was no unwise one; and their lion

(7) Ruskin  
on the  
Matterhorn  
Accident

of flawed molasse at Lucerne, worthless in point of art though it be, is nevertheless a better reward than much pay ; and a better ornament to the old town than the Schweizer Hof, or flat new quay, for the promenade of those travellers who do *not* take guides into danger. The British public are, however, at home, so innocent of ever buying their fellow creatures' lives, that we may justly expect them to be punctilious abroad ! They do not, perhaps, often calculate how many souls flit annually, choked in fire-damp and sea-sand, from economically watched shafts and economically manned ships ; nor see the fiery ghosts writhe up out of every scuttle-full of cheap coals ; nor count how many threads of girlish life are cut off and woven annually by painted Fates, into breadths of ball dresses ; or soaked away, like rotten hemp-fibre, in the inlet of Cocytus which overflows the Grassmarket where flesh is as grass. We need not, it seems to me, loudly blame any one for paying a guide to take a brave walk with him. Therefore, gentlemen of the Alpine Club, as much danger as you care to face, by all means ; but, if it please you, not so much talk of it. The real ground for reprehension of Alpine climbing is that, with less cause, it excites more vanity than any other athletic skill. A good horseman knows what it has cost to make him one ; everybody else knows it too, and knows that he is one ; he need not ride at a fence merely to show his seat. But credit for practice in climbing can only be claimed after success, which, though perhaps accidental and unmerited, must yet be attained at all risks, or the shame of defeat borne with no evidence of the difficulties encountered. At this particular period, also, the distinction obtainable by first conquest of a peak is as tempting to a traveller as the discovery of a new element to a chemist, or of a new species to a naturalist. Vanity is never so keenly excited as by competitions which involve chance ; the course of science is continually arrested, and its nomenclature fatally confused, by the eagerness of even wise and able men to establish their priority in an unimportant discovery, or obtain vested right to a syllable in a deformed word ; and many an otherwise sensible person will risk his life for the sake of a line in future guide-books, to the effect that 'the ——horn was first ascended by Mr. X. in the year ——' ; never reflecting that of all the lines in the page, the one he



has thus wrought for will be precisely the least interesting to the reader.

It is not, therefore, strange, however much to be regretted, that while no gentleman boasts in other cases of his sagacity or his courage—while no good soldier talks of the charge he led, nor any good sailor of the helm he held—every man among the Alps seems to lose his senses and modesty with the fall of the barometer, and returns from his Nephelo-coccygia brandishing his ice-axe in everybody's face. Whatever the Alpine Club have done, or may yet accomplish, in a sincere thirst for mountain knowledge, and in happy sense of youthful strength and play of animal spirit, they have done, and will do wisely and well; but whatever they are urged to by mere sting of competition and itch of praise, they will do, as all vain things must be done for ever, foolishly and ill. It is a strange proof of that absence of any real national love of science, of which I have had occasion to speak in the text, that no entire survey of the Alps has yet been made by properly qualified men; and that, except of the chain of Chamouni, no accurate maps exist, nor any complete geographical section even of that. But Mr. Kelly's survey of that central group, and the generally accurate information collected in the guide book published by the Club, are honourable results of English adventure; and it is to be hoped that the continuance of such work will gradually put an end to the vulgar excitement which looked upon the granite of the Alps only as an unoccupied advertisement wall for chalking names upon.

Respecting the means of accomplishing such work with least risk, there was a sentence in the article of our leading public journal, which deserves, and requires expansion.

'Their (the Alpine Club's) ropes must not break.'

Certainly not! Nor any one else's ropes, if they may be rendered unbreakable by honesty of make; seeing that more lives hang by them on moving than on motionless seas. The records of the last gale at the Cape may teach us that economy in the manufacture of cables is not always a matter for exultation; and, on the whole, it may even be well in an honest country, sending out, and up and down, various lines east and west, that *nothing* should break; banks—words—nor dredging tackle.

Granting, therefore, such praise and such sphere of exertion as we thus justly may, to the spirit of adventure, there is one consequence of it, coming directly under my own cognizance, of which I can but speak with utter regret—the loss, namely, of all real understanding of the character and beauty of Switzerland, by the country's now being regarded as half watering-place, half gymnasium. It is indeed true that under the influence of the pride which gives poignancy to the sensations which others cannot share with us (and a not unjustifiable zest to the pleasure which we have worked for), an ordinary traveller will usually observe and enjoy more on a difficult excursion than on an easy one; and more in objects to which he is unaccustomed than in those with which he is familiar. He will notice with extreme interest that snow is white on the top of a hill in June, though he would have attached little importance to the same peculiarity in the wreath at the bottom of a hill in January. He will generally find more to admire in a cloud under his feet than in one over his head; and, oppressed by the monotony of a sky which is prevalently blue, will derive extraordinary satisfaction from its approximation to black. Add to such grounds of delight the aid given to the effect of whatever is impressive in the scenery of the high Alps, by the absence of ludicrous or degrading concomitants; and it ceases to be surprising that Alpine excursionists should be greatly pleased, or that they should attribute their pleasure to some true and increasing apprehension of the nobleness of natural scenery. But no impression can be more false. The real beauty of the Alps is to be seen, and seen only, where all may see it, the child, the cripple and the man of grey hairs. There is more true loveliness in a single glade of pasture shadowed by pine, or gleam of rocky brook, or inlet of unsullied lake, among the lower Bernese and Savoyard hills, than in the entire field of jagged gneiss which crests the central ridge from the Schreckhorn to the Viso. The valley of Cluse, through which unhappy travellers consent now to be invoiced, packed in baskets like fish, so only that they may cheaply reach, in the feverous haste which has become the law of their being, the glen of Chamouni, whose every lovely foreground rock has now been broken up to build hotels for them, contains more beauty in half a

league of it than the entire valley they have devastated, and turned into a casino, did in its uninjured pride; and that passage of the Jura by Olten (between Basle and Lucerne), which is by the modern tourist triumphantly effected through a tunnel in ten minutes, between two piggish trumpet grunts proclamatory of the ecstatic transit, used to show from every turn and sweep of its winding ascent, up which one sauntered, gathering wild flowers, for half a happy day, diviner aspects of the distant Alps than ever were achieved by toil of limb, or won by risk of life.

There is indeed a healthy enjoyment both in engineers' work and in school-boys' play; the making and mending of roads has its true enthusiasms, and I have still pleasure enough in mere scrambling to wonder not a little at the supreme gravity with which apes exercise their superior powers in that kind, as if profitless to them. But neither macadamisation, nor tunnelling, nor rope ladders, will ever enable one human creature to understand the pleasure in natural scenery felt by Theocritus or Virgil; and I believe the athletic health of our school-boys might be made perfectly consistent with a spirit of more courtesy, and reverence, both for men and things, than is recognisable in the behaviour of the modern youth. Some year or two back I was staying at the Montanvert to paint Alpine roses, and went every day to watch the budding of a favourite bed, which was rounding into faultless bloom beneath a cirque of rock, high enough, as I hoped, and close enough, to guard it from rude eyes and plucking hands. But

‘Tra erto e piano er’ un sentiere sghembo,  
Che ne condusse in fianco della lacca,’

and on the day it reached the fulness of its rubied fire, I was standing near when it was discovered by a forager on the flanks of a travelling school of English and German lads. He shouted to his companions, and they swooped down upon it; threw themselves into it, rolled over and over in it, shrieked, hallooed and fought in it, trampled it down and tore it up by the roots; breathless at last with rapture of ravage, they fixed the brightest of the remnant blossoms of it in their caps, and went on their way rejoicing.

They left me much to think upon ; partly respecting the essential power of the beauty which could so excite them, and partly respecting the character of the youth which could only be excited to destroy. But the incident was a perfect type of that irreverence for natural beauty with respect to which I said in the text, at the place already indicated, 'you make railroads of the aisles of the cathedrals of the earth, and eat off their altars.' For indeed all true lovers of natural beauty hold it in reverence so deep, that they would as soon think of climbing the pillars of the choir of Beauvais for a gymnastic exercise, as of making a playground of Alpine snow : and they would not risk one hour of their joy among the hill meadows on a May morning, for the fame of having stood on every pinnacle of the silver temple, and beheld the kingdoms of the world from it. Love of excitement is so far from being love of beauty, that it ends always in a joy in its exact reverse ; joy in destruction,—as of my poor roses—or in actual details of death ; until in the literature of the day 'nothing is too dreadful, or too trivial, for the greed of the public.' And in politics, apathy, irreverence, and lust of luxury go hand in hand, until the best solemnization which can be conceived for the greatest event in modern European history, the crowning of Florence capital of Italy, is the accursed and ill-omened folly of casting down her old walls and surrounding her with a 'boulevard,' and this at the very time when every stone of her ancient cities is more precious to her than the gems of a Urim breastplate, and when every nerve of her heart and brain should have been strained to redeem her guilt and fulfil her freedom. It is not by making roads round Florence, but through Calabria, that she should begin her Roman causeway work again ; and her fate points her march, not on boulevards by Arno, but waist-deep in the lagoons at Venice. Not yet indeed ; but five years of patience and discipline of her youth would accomplish her power, and sweep the martello towers from the cliffs of Verona, and the ramparts from the marsh of Mestre. But she will not teach her youth that discipline on boulevards.

Strange, that while we both, French and English, can give lessons in war, we only corrupt other nations when they imitate either our pleasures or our industries. We English, had we loved

Switzerland indeed, should have striven to elevate, but not to disturb, the simplicity of her people, by teaching them the sacredness of their fields and waters, the honour of their pastoral and burgher life, and the fellowship in glory of the grey turreted walls round their ancient cities, with the cottages in their fair groups by the forest and lake. Beautiful, indeed, upon the mountains, had been the feet of any of those who had spoken peace to their children;—who had taught those princely peasants to remember their lineage, and their league with the rocks of the field; that so they might keep their mountain waters pure, and their mountain paths peaceful, and their traditions of domestic life holy. We have taught them (incapable by circumstances and position of ever becoming a great commercial nation), all the foulness of the modern lust of wealth, without its practical intelligences; and we have developed exactly the weakness of their temperament by which they are liable to meanest ruin. Of the ancient architecture and most expressive beauty of their country there is now little vestige left; and it is one of the few reasons which console me for the advance of life, that I am old enough to remember the time when the sweet waters of the Reuss and Limmat (now full with refuse of manufacture) were as crystalline as the heaven above them; when her pictured bridges and embattled towers ran unbroken round Lucerne; when the Rhone flowed in deep-green, softly dividing currents round the wooden ramparts of Geneva; and when from the marble roof of the Western vault of Milan, I could watch the Rose of Italy flush in the first morning light, before a human foot had sullied its summit, or the reddening dawn on its rocks taken shadow of sadness from the crimson, which, long ago, stained the ripples of Otterburn.

Ruskin.

*Sesame and Lilies.*

Preface to the Second Edition (1865).

## HEROIC DEATHS

[In this passage Guido Rey describes the death of Carrel, the guide who had so nearly succeeded in accomplishing the first victory over the Matterhorn by any route, and who actually first climbed it from the Italian side.

Following it is the description of the same incident by Signor Sinigaglia, one of the members of the party with Carrel.]

(1) **The Death  
of Carrel:**  
**By Guido  
Rey**

ON a morning drear as this, but far more terrible, Carrel the Bersagliere had left the hut at the Tower for his last descent, which came to an end not far below the Col, after a night and a day of fearful struggle near a rock by which there now stands a cross. Ten years have passed since then. The pilgrims of the Matterhorn stop reverently before that rock. It was there that the old soldier, weary after his last desperate battle, his strength all gone, was laid by his comrades; it was there that he died. Perhaps in the visions of his last moment he heard once more the trumpets sounding on the Colle di San Martino, and the shouts of victory on the conquered Matterhorn; these were the two glories of his life. Or perhaps his mind grew suddenly dark, and he was not even conscious of his own heroism which had saved his companions on that last descent. Such was the end of the long contest between the mountaineer and his mountain; a contest that lasted thirty years, full of ardent deeds of daring and of passive defence, of hard-won victories, and of defeats that were glorious as any victory. Carrel had ceased to conquer; his weapons were worn out with long use, blunt with age, and no longer served the valour and experience of the ancient warrior. The Matterhorn watched its opportunity and dealt him his death-blow. But popular rumour immediately lent a noble shape to the image of the first of the Matterhorn guides. 'Carrel did not fall; he died,' they said in his native valley, and Carrel endured in legend invincible as he had lived.

No fairer death than this could have come to the conqueror of the Matterhorn. When I left that cross behind me, I think I looked upon my guides with a deeper feeling of affection and gratitude than before.

Guido Rey.  
*The Matterhorn.*  
T. Fisher Unwin.

**By Sinigaglia.** CARREL started on August 23rd from Breuil, with Signor Sinigaglia and Charles Gorret, of Valtournanche, intending to cross the Matterhorn; owing to a sudden change of weather they were confined to the hut on the Italian side with little to eat, the

temperature falling considerably below freezing-point during the night. On the 25th they gave up the expedition, and started to return to Breuil at 9 A.M., the wind still blowing violently. The difficulties they encountered in the descent were immense, the rocks being glazed with ice and the ropes half-frozen, the whole side of the mountain being in addition covered with fresh snow, which obliterated all sign of the necessary hand-holds. Owing to this the Col du Lion was not reached until 2-30 P.M. Here the wind increased to a hurricane, nearly suffocating the party with snow and plastering their eyes with ice, while Gorret, having lost a glove, sustained frost-bite in one of his hands. At 11 P.M. they were still battling their way down the rocks. It was shortly after this that Carrel succumbed to exhaustion. Signor Sinigaglia's account of his death is one of the most pathetic stories in Alpine literature. Referring to the spot where Carrel died, he says: 'From this place a short, steep passage takes one down to the pastures, where there was safety. Gorret descended first and I after him. We were nearly at the bottom, when I felt the rope pulled. We stopped, awkwardly placed as we were, and cried out to Carrel several times to come down, but we received no answer. Alarmed, we went up a little way, and heard him say, in a faint voice, "Come up and fetch me, I have no strength left." We went up and found that he was lying with his face to the ground, holding on to a rock, in a semi-conscious state, and unable to get up or to move a step. With extreme difficulty we carried him up to a safe place, and asked him what was the matter. His only answer was, "I know no longer where I am." His hands were getting colder and colder, his speech weaker and more broken, and his body more still. We did all we could for him, putting with great difficulty the rest of the cognac in his mouth. He said something and appeared to revive, but this did not last long. We tried rubbing him with snow, and shaking him, and calling to him continually; but he could only answer with moans. We tried to lift him, but it was impossible—he was getting stiff. We stooped down and asked in his ear if he wished to commend his soul to God. With a last effort he answered "Yes," and then fell on his back, dead, upon the snow.

'With broken hearts, we cut the rope which bound us to our dear



brave companion, and continued the descent. We arrived at Breuil at five in the morning (of the 26th) having walked twenty hours without food or rest. Under ordinary circumstances the descent from the hut to Giomein (Breuil) is accomplished in from four to five hours.'

A little iron cross now marks the spot on the Alps above Breuil where Carrel lay down and died, having faithfully guided his party during that terrible night until they had reached a place of safety.

Edmund J. Garwood.

Introduction to Leone Sinigaglia's *Climbing in the Dolomites*.

T. Fisher Unwin.

[I knew Mr. Nettleship as lecturer and friend in 1887, and at that time he had no thought of mountain-climbing. I met him at Macugnaga in 1890 with two guides. He was going over the New Weissthor, and it was quite clear from his conversation that the mountain-passion had seized him in a very severe form—always a dangerous thing when it comes late in life. Two years afterwards he perished in the unhappy manner described beneath by Mr. Mathews.]

(2) The Death  
of Nettleship

ON the 25th August 1892, Mr. Richard Lewis Nettleship, a distinguished Fellow and Tutor of Balliol College, Oxford, lost his life on the mountain. He started from the Col de Voza early on the twenty-fourth, and reached the Aiguille du Goûter at one in the afternoon. The morning was fine, but there were indications of a change, and heavy clouds were rolling up from the south when the Aiguille was attained. His guides were Alfred Comte and Gaspard Simond, Chamonix men of poor repute. Instead of instantly retreating, they hoped they might be able to reach the Vallot hut, two or three hours distant; but within an hour from the Aiguille the storm burst and the party were enveloped in a 'tourmente.' They lost their way, and after wandering about for some hours vainly endeavouring to regain it, they dug a hole in the snow and passed the night there. Mr. Nettleship was in good spirits, though the storm continued through the whole of the night. On the morning of the twenty-fifth it was still snowing hard, and the guides pressed Mr. Nettleship to stay where he was, but he refused, saying it was idle to remain there and die like cowards,

and that they must make an effort to get away. He started, the guides following him. After walking a little way he became unsteady and stumbled, then cried out and fell forward, and bidding them good-bye, expired. The guides, on the weather clearing a little, made for the Vallot hut, and the next day descended to Chamonix, and the body was afterwards discovered, and brought down.

C. E. Mathews.

*The Annals of Mont Blanc.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

[On the 30th August 1899 I arrived at Evolena late in the evening. Almost immediately after, there came a telegraphic message from Zermatt that four men had fallen off the Dent Blanche on our side of the mountain. We immediately organised a search party, and after twelve hours we found all the bodies of our friends lying on the rocks above the great glacier that runs beneath the precipices of the north-west arête of the Dent Blanche. We brought the bodies to Evolena, returning after twenty hours on the mountain. We buried them quite simply in the Evolena churchyard. It was just the spot which Mr. Glynne Jones—with whom the love of the mountains was a consuming passion—would have chosen as his resting-place.

The following is the climax of a narrative which I wrote at the time for *M'Clure's Magazine* in America and the *Strand* in the United Kingdom. This narrative was based, of course, on the story told to me by the one survivor of the party, Mr. F. W. Hill, now second Master at the City of London school.]

THEY had been forced below the ridge by the difficulty of the rocks, and had come to a place where their obvious route lay up a narrow gully, or sloping chimney. On an ordinary day it is possible that they would have found no difficulty in going forward, but a few days before there had been rain, and probably snow, on these high rock summits. At any rate, the rocks were 'glazed'; covered, that is, with a film of ice, probably snow melted and re-frozen, just sufficiently thick to adhere, and sufficiently slippery to make the fingers 'slither' over the rocks. If the climber cannot clear away the ice with his ice-axe, he must go round another way, and if the rocks are steep the first course becomes obviously

(3) The  
Death of  
Glynne Jones

impossible. That was the condition of affairs at ten o'clock on the morning of 28th August 1899.

In a party of five roped together, with thirty feet of rope between each member, the amount of space covered by the party will obviously be forty yards; and it frequently happens that those who are roped last cannot see the leaders. Mr. Hill was roped last, and by the time he reached the level of the other climbers Furrer had already turned away from the gully and was attempting to climb to the ridge by another route. To the left of the gully in front of them was a vertical rock face stretching for about thirty feet. Beyond this was a smooth-looking buttress some ten feet high, by climbing which the party could regain the ridge. When Hill came up with the rest, Furrer was already attempting to climb this buttress.

But the buttress was quite smooth, and Furrer was at a loss to find a hold. Unable to support himself, he called to Zurbriggen to place an axe under his feet for him to stand on. In this way he might be able to reach with his hands to the top of the buttress. There was nothing unusual in this method of procedure. In climbing difficult rocks when the hand-holds are far up, it is frequently the custom to help the climber by placing an ice-axe under his feet. But in this case Furrer discovered that he could not climb the buttress with the help of Zurbriggen alone, and he would probably have done more wisely if he had abandoned the attempt. But, instead of that, he called Glynne Jones to help Zurbriggen in holding him up.

'Apparently,' says Mr. Hill, 'he did not feel safe, for he turned his head, and spoke to Glynne Jones, who then went to hold the axe steady.'

From Mr. Hill's own explanations the situation was as follows: The leading climber, Furrer, was grasping the rock face, standing on an ice-axe held vertically by Zurbriggen and Glynne Jones. These two were forced, in order to hold the ice-axe securely, to crouch down with their faces to the ground, and were therefore oblivious of what was going on above them. But the important point is that their four hands were occupied in holding the ice-axe, and that as they were standing on a narrow ledge, with a very

sharp slope immediately below, these two men were in a helpless position. They were unready to stand a shock. Thus, at the critical moment, out of a party of five climbers, three had virtually cast everything on a single die!

Mr. Hill, standing level with the rest of the party, could see quite clearly what was happening. He was about sixty feet distant from them, the guide Vuignier being roped between them at an equal distance of some thirty feet from each. Furrer could now stand upright on the axe, which was firmly held by four strong hands, and could reach with his own fingers to the top of the buttress. It was a perilous moment. It is the rule with skilled climbers that you should never leave your foot-hold until you have secured your hand-hold. The natural issue would have been that Furrer, finding it impossible to secure on the smooth rock a steady grip with his hands, should have declined to trust himself. But the science of the study is one thing and the art of the mountain another. There are moments when a man does not know whether he has secured a steady grip or an unsteady, and the question can only be answered by making the attempt. If the party blundered at all, it was in allowing the second and third men to be so completely occupied with holding the axe that there was no reserve of power to hold up Furrer in case of a slip. But it is easy to speak after the event.

What Hill now saw was this: He saw Furrer reach his hands to the top of the buttress, take a grip, and attempt to pull himself up. But his feet never left the ice-axe beneath, for in the process of gripping his hands slipped. And then, as Hill looked, Furrer's body slowly fell back. It seemed, he has told himself, to take quite a long time falling. Furrer fell backwards, right on to the two oblivious men beneath, causing them to collapse instantly, knocking them off their standing-place, and carrying them with him in his fall from the ridge. 'All three,' says Mr. Hill in his narrative, 'fell together.' Instinctively he turned to the wall to get a better hold of the rock, and therefore did not see the next incident in the fatal sequence. Vuignier, as we have seen, was standing thirty feet from the first three, and the weight of three human bodies swinging at the end of the rope must have come

directly on him. He was, apparently, taken by surprise, and immediately pulled off the rock. Hill heard that terrible sound,—the scuffle and rattle of stones that meant the dragging of a helpless human being into space—and he knew, or thought he knew, that his own turn would come in a moment; but as he clung there to the rock, waiting for the inevitable end, there was a pause.

After a few seconds of time he faced round and found himself alone. Looking down, he saw his four companions sliding down the precipitous slopes at a terrific rate, without a cry, but with arms outstretched, helplessly falling into the abyss. Between him and them, and from his waist, there hung thirty feet of rope swinging slowly to and fro.

Harold Spender.

[Mr. Norman Neruda died on the Funfingerspitze, on the 7th September 1898. The following description is by his wife.]

(4) The  
Death of  
Norman  
Neruda

I CANNOT describe that climb, clearly as its very minutest detail is burned into my brain. At first all went well, and it was not until we had surmounted the difficult block above the 'Kirchal' that my husband owned to not feeling well, and complained of severe pains at the back of the head. Both Herr Dietrich and I used every effort to persuade him to give up the ascent, but he refused, saying that we had got over the hardest bit and that he would take a rest a little higher up, as the place we had then reached was inconvenient. It was the very spot on to which he afterwards fell! Dietrich now led up the following 15-20 feet of the chimney, even here of no slight degree of difficulty, and on the small platform, above which the chimney becomes apparently impracticable, we halted for more than half an hour.

This platform, composed of loose rubble on the top of a large boulder, wedged into the chimney, is, in parts, three to four feet wide, and is closed at the back by a sort of cave some five feet in depth, down whose walls water drips continually night and day in the warm weather.

A drink of water seemed to revive my husband, and presently he announced his readiness to continue the ascent. As he had done on previous occasions, he followed the original route described by

Schmitt, by climbing out of the chimney on to the left (orographical right) wall of the peak. (The road generally followed nowadays is the variant discovered by the guide Dimai which leaves the chimney by a ledge on the right-hand side.) After he had mounted up a few feet, he turned to us and apologised for going so slowly, saying that he was out of breath. Again we suggested a retreat, but he refused. For the first time on any of our numerous climbs the idea crossed my mind that something might happen, and I asked my companion to stand in front of me—naturally I was roped in the centre of the party—to secure the rope.

A moment later my husband called down to us, 'Now we've got it; the worst bit is passed,' and scarcely another moment later, on an easy place, without any sign of a slip or any apparent reason for one, he called 'Ich falle, ich falle; halt!' ('I am falling, I am falling; hold!'), and without even an attempt to save himself fell backwards. The distance from us was some fifty or sixty feet and about twenty feet above us as near as it is possible to judge. The distance of the fall must have been close upon ninety feet—nearly the whole length of our English rope. Herr Dietrich's coolness and presence of mind were simply marvellous, and undoubtedly averted an even more terrible disaster. Literally as quick as thought he drew in the slack of the rope as my poor husband fell, and wound the coils round his arm; it slipped off a knob of rock round which he threw it. My husband fell into the chimney some twenty feet below us, striking his head against the wall . . . then disappeared from our sight. The shock came upon Dietrich just as he was standing, and so great was the jerk that a coil or two of the rope ran through the fingers of his left hand, cutting them down to the bone. But he held on. How, neither of us can explain. Instinctively I had run back to the inner end of the cave, but needless to say it would have been a physical impossibility for me to have held the double weight had Dietrich also fallen, and there was some ninety feet of rope to run out between us.

It was all over in a flash, and there was no time to realise anything. For a second or two I was on the brink of losing my presence of mind, but a word from my companion recalled the mountaineer in me, and scarcely less cool than he himself, I helped

him to secure the rope round a big boulder, and held the end while he climbed down into the chimney. Those were ghastly moments! and they would have been even more ghastly had I known that Dietrich found my poor husband out of the rope-sling save for one arm hanging over the abyss! I could see nothing from where I stood! I could hear Dietrich speak to my husband, but there was no reply, for he was quite unconscious. With almost incredible strength Dietrich managed to lift the unconscious form back on the small sloping space above the last difficult block in the chimney; before doing this, he unroped himself, lest he should lose his balance and fall, in order not to drag me with him. He levelled down the stones as far as possible and secured my husband with both ropes, as the English one showed signs of the terrible strain it had undergone; I pulled in the slackened coils and fastened them securely round the boulder. Then my companion came up to me—no easy matter unroped, and with a wounded hand—and told me that the injuries were not at all serious—a slight head wound and injury to one foot. He knew at the time that the head wound was a very serious one, but dare not tell me for fear I might insist upon going down to the spot where my husband lay; and that, as all who have seen the place are agreed, would probably have involved destruction for all, for there was only room for one, and it would have been impossible to have remained there safely unroped with a delirious man.

Dietrich again went down with water and our spare handkerchiefs to bandage the wounds. We had nothing either in the way of food or drink with us.

It was 2 P.M. For three long hours we two now shouted for help, using the recognised Alpine danger-call. This shouting acted as a safety valve for our pent-up emotions, and well for us was it that we had no time to think, no time to realise what had happened. At first my poor husband lay quiet, then he began to rave, but never at any moment during all those weary hours of that and the next day did he show any sign of consciousness, or reply to any questions, and he spoke only German in his delirium, always the same sentences—'Lasset das Seil herunter—schmeiss das Seil herab—kehren wir um, ja?—ich geh' jetzt herunter—zieh'



das Seil ein.' 'Let the rope down—chuck the rope down—let's go back, eh? I'm going down now—pull in the rope!'

Throughout the evening and night he remained quiet.

About five o'clock we were at last sure our calls had been understood—for a long time the herdsmen below thought we were merely shouting for fun.

Mrs. Norman Neruda.

*The Climbs of Norman Neruda.*

T. Fisher Unwin.

### ALAS!

THE difficulties of the climb are almost over. There, before us, rises the final peak of spotless snow, glistening in the glorious Alpine sunshine. The Spirit of Exaltation seizes us, and words of light-hearted triumph over difficulties passed escape our lips. All is joyous as we count the hard-earned prize as won. Then, suddenly, a slip—perhaps following an incautious step—a cry—a swiftly falling body—the noise of falling rocks and ice, growing fainter, and ever fainter in the distance—and Silence.

The Alpine  
Accident

Then, indeed, is 'the dancing turned into mourning,' and the *Great King Death* grasps with either hand the Mountain Peak and the quiet fireside of the distant English Home.

C. E. Shea.

## V

## THE ALPS IN COMEDY

[Mr. A. D. Godley has the triple distinction of being a climber, a scholar, and a gifted writer of light verse. To me he has the personal interest of having saved my life on the Welsh mountain Tryfaen.]

**A Summer  
Longing**

IN the steamy, stuffy Midlands, 'neath an English summer sky,  
When the holidays are nearing with the closing of July,  
And experienced Alpine stagers and impetuous recruits  
Are renewing with the season their continual disputes—

Those inveterate disputes

On the newest Alpine routes—

And inspecting the condition of their mountaineering boots :

You may stifle your reflections, you may banish them afar,  
You may try to draw a solace from the thought of 'Nächstes Jahr'—  
But your heart is with those climbers, and you'll feverishly yearn  
To be crossing of the Channel with your baggage labelled 'Bern,'

Leaving England far astern

With a ticket through to Bern,

And regarding your profession with a lordly unconcern.

*They* will lie beside the torrent, just as you were wont to do,  
With the woodland green around them, and a snowfield shining  
through :

They will tread the higher pastures, where celestial breezes blow,  
While the valley lies in shadow and the peaks are all aglow—

Where the airs of Heaven blow

'Twixt the pine woods and the snow

And the shades of evening deepen in the valley far below :

They will scale the mountain strongholds that in days of old you won,

They will plod behind a lantern ere the rising of the sun,  
On a 'grat' or in a chimney, on the steep and dizzy slope,  
For a foothold or a handhold they will diligently grope—

On the rocky, icy slope,

(Where we'll charitably hope

'Tis assistance only Moral that they're getting from a rope);

They will dine on mule and marmot, and on mutton made of goats,  
They will face the various horrors of Helvetian table-d'hotes:  
But whate'er the paths that lead them, and the food whereon they fare,

They will taste the joy of living, as you only taste it there,

As you taste it Only There

In the higher, purer air,

Unapproachable by worries and oblivious quite of care!

Place me somewhere in the Valais, 'mid the mountains west of Binn,

West of Binn and east of Savoy, in a decent kind of inn,  
With a peak or two for climbing, and a glacier to explore—  
Any mountains will content me, though they've all been climbed before—

Yes! I care not any more

Though they've all been done before,

And the names they keep in bottles may be numbered by the score!

Though the hand of Time be heavy: though your ancient comrades fail:

Though the mountains you ascended be accessible by rail:

Though your nerve begin to weaken, and you're gouty grown and fat,

And prefer to walk in places which are reasonably flat—

Though you grow so very fat

That you climb the Gorner Grat

Or perhaps the Little Scheideck,—and are rather proud of that:

Yet I hope that till you die  
 You will annually sigh  
 For a vision of the Valais with the coming of July,  
 For the Oberland or Valais, and the higher, purer air,  
 And the true delight of living, as you taste it only there !

A. D. Godley.

*Second Strings.*

By kind permission of the author and  
 Messrs. Methuen and Co.

### MARK TWAIN

[This is the famous parody of a great ascent contained in *A Tramp Abroad*.]

#### The Great Riffel Climb

AFTER I had finished my readings I was no longer myself; I was tranced, uplifted, intoxicated, by the almost incredible perils and adventures I had been following my authors through, and the triumphs I had been sharing with them. I sat silent some time then turned to Harris, and said—

‘My mind is made up.’

Something in my tone struck him; and when he glanced at my eye and read what was written there, his face paled perceptibly. He hesitated a moment, then said—

‘Speak.’

I answered with perfect calmness—

‘I will ascend the Riffelberg.’

If I had shot my poor friend he could not have fallen from his chair more suddenly. If I had been his father he could not have pleaded harder to get me to give up my purpose. But I turned a deaf ear to all he said. When he perceived at last that nothing could alter my determination he ceased to urge, and for a while the deep silence was only broken by his sobs. I sat in marble resolution, with my eyes fixed on vacancy, for in spirit I was already wrestling with the perils of the mountains, and my friend sat gazing at me in adoring admiration through his tears. At last he threw himself upon me in a loving embrace, and exclaimed in broken tones—

'Your Harris will never desert you. We will die together!'

I cheered the noble fellow with praises, and soon his fears were forgotten, and he was eager for the adventure. He wanted to summon the guides at once and leave at two in the morning, as he supposed the custom was; but I explained that nobody was looking at that hour, and that the start in the dark was not usually made from the village, but from the first night's resting-place on the mountain side. I said we could leave the village at three or four p.m. on the morrow; meantime he could notify the guides, and also let the public know of the attempt which we proposed to make.

I went to bed, but not to sleep. No man can sleep when he is about to undertake one of these Alpine exploits. I tossed feverishly all night long, and was glad enough when I heard the clock strike half-past eleven, and knew it was time to get up for dinner. I rose jaded and rusty, and went to the noon meal, where I found myself the centre of interest and curiosity, for the news was already abroad. It is not easy to eat calmly when you are a lion, but it is very pleasant nevertheless.

As usual at Zermatt, when a great ascent is about to be undertaken, everybody, native and foreign, laid aside his own projects and took up a good position to observe the start. The expedition consisted of 198 persons including the mules, or 205 including the cows. As follows:—

## CHIEFS OF SERVICE

Myself.  
Mr. Harris.  
17 guides.  
4 surgeons.  
1 geologist.  
1 botanist.  
3 chaplains.  
2 draftsmen.  
15 barkeepers.  
1 Latinist.

## SUBORDINATES

1 veterinary surgeon.  
1 butler.  
12 waiters.  
1 footman.  
1 barber.  
1 head cook.  
9 assistants.  
4 pastry cooks.  
1 confectionery artist.

## TRANSPORTATION, ETC.

27 porters.	3 coarse washers and ironers.
44 mules.	1 fine ditto
44 muleteers.	7 cows.
	2 milkers.

Total, 154 men, 51 animals. Grand total, 205.

## RATIONS, ETC.

16 cases hams.  
 2 barrels flour.  
 22 barrels whisky.  
 1 barrel sugar.  
 1 keg lemons.  
 2000 cigars.  
 1 barrel pies.  
 1 ton of pemmican.  
 143 pair crutches.  
 2 barrels arnica.  
 1 bale of lint.  
 27 kegs paregoric.

## APPARATUS

25 spring mattresses.  
 2 hair ditto  
 Bedding for same.  
 2 mosquito nets.  
 29 tents.  
 Scientific instruments.  
 97 ice-axes.  
 5 cases dynamite.  
 7 cans nitro-glycerine.  
 22 40-foot ladders.  
 2 miles of rope.  
 154 umbrellas.

It was full four o'clock in the afternoon before my cavalcade was entirely ready. At that hour it began to move. In point of numbers and spectacular effect it was the most imposing expedition that had ever marched from Zermatt.

I commanded the chief guide to arrange the men and animals in single file, twelve feet apart, and lash them altogether on a strong rope. He objected that the first two miles was a dead level, with plenty of room, and that the rope was never used except in very dangerous places. But I would not listen to that. My reading had taught me that many serious accidents had happened in the Alps simply from not having the people tied up soon enough; I was not going to add one to the list. The guide then obeyed my order.

When the procession stood at ease, roped together, I never saw a finer sight. It was 3,122 feet long—over half a mile: every man but Harris and me was on foot, and had on his green veil and his

blue goggles, and his white rag around his hat, and his coil of rope over one shoulder and under the other, and his ice-axe in his belt, and carried his alpenstock in his left hand, his umbrella (closed) in his right, and his crutches slung at his back. The burdens of the pack mules and the horns of the cows were decked with the Edelweiss and the Alpine rose.

I and my agent were the only persons mounted. We were in the post of danger in the extreme rear, and tied securely to five guides apiece. Our armour-bearers carried our ice-axes, alpenstocks and other implements for us. We were mounted upon very small donkeys, as a measure of safety; in time of peril we could straighten our legs and stand up, and let the donkey walk from under. Still, I cannot recommend this sort of animal—at least for excursions of mere pleasure—because his ears interrupt the view. I and my agent possessed the regulation mountaineering costumes, but concluded to leave them behind. Out of respect for the great numbers of tourists of both sexes who would be assembled in front of the hotels to see us pass, and also out of respect for the many tourists whom we expected to encounter on our expedition, we decided to make the ascent in evening dress.

At fifteen minutes past four I gave the command to move, and my subordinates passed it along the line. The great crowd in front of the Monte Rosa hotel parted in twain, with a cheer, as the procession approached, and as the head of it was filing by I gave the order, 'Unlimber—make ready—*hoist!*' and with one impulse up went my half mile of umbrellas. It was a beautiful sight, and a total surprise to the spectators. Nothing like that had ever been seen in the Alps before. The applause it brought forth was deeply gratifying to me, and I rode by with my plug hat in my hand to testify my appreciation of it. It was the only testimony I could offer, for I was too full to speak.

We watered the caravan at the old stream which rushes down a trough near the end of the village, and soon afterwards left the haunts of civilisation behind us. About half-past five o'clock we arrived at a bridge which spans the Visp, and after throwing over a detachment to see if it was safe, the caravan crossed without accident. The way now led, by a gentle ascent carpeted with



fresh green grass, to the Church of Winkelmatten. Without stopping to examine this edifice, I executed a flank movement to the right and crossed the bridge over the Findelenbach, after first testing its strength. Here I deployed to the right again, and presently entered an inviting stretch of meadow land which was unoccupied, save by a couple of deserted huts towards its furthest extremity. These meadows offered an excellent camping-place. We pitched our tents, supped, established a proper guard, regarded the events of the day, and then went to bed.

We rose at two in the morning and dressed by candle light. It was a dismal and chilly business. A few stars were shining, but the general heavens were overcast, and the great shaft of the Matterhorn was draped in a sable pall of clouds. The chief guide advised a delay; he said he feared it was going to rain. We waited until nine o'clock and then got away in tolerably clear weather.

Our course led up some terrific steepes, densely wooded with larches and cedars, and traversed by paths which the rains had guttered and which were obstructed by loose stones. To add to the danger and inconvenience, we were constantly meeting returning tourists on foot or horseback, and as constantly being crowded and battered by ascending tourists who were in a hurry and wanted to get by.

Our troubles thickened. About the middle of the afternoon the seventeen guides called a halt and held a consultation. After consulting an hour they said their first suspicion remained intact—that is to say they believed they were lost. I asked if they did not *know* it? No, they said, they *couldn't* absolutely know whether they were lost or not, because none of them had ever been in that part of the country before. They had a strong instinct that they were lost, but they had no proofs, except that they did not know where they were. They had met no tourists for some time, and they considered that a suspicious sign.

Plainly we were in an ugly fix. The guides were naturally unwilling to go alone and seek a way out of the difficulty; so we all went together. For better security we moved slowly and cautiously, for the forest was very dense. We did not move up the mountain, but around it, hoping to strike across the old trail.

Toward nightfall, when we were about tired out, we came up against a rock as big as a cottage. This barrier took all the remaining spirit out of the men, and a panic of fear and despair ensued. They moaned and wept, and said they should never see their homes and their dear ones again. Then they began to upbraid me for bringing them upon this fatal expedition. Some even muttered threats against me.

Clearly it was no time to show weakness. So I made a speech in which I said that other Alp-climbers had been in as perilous a position as this, and yet by courage and perseverance had escaped. I promised to stand by them; I promised to rescue them. I closed by saying we had plenty of provisions to maintain us for quite a siege; and did they suppose Zermatt would allow half a mile of men and mules to mysteriously disappear during any considerable time, right above their noses, and make no enquiries? No, Zermatt would send out searching expeditions, and we should be saved.

This speech had a great effect. The men pitched their tents with some little show of cheerfulness, and we were snugly under cover when the night shut down.

Mark Twain.

*A Tramp Abroad.*

By kind permission of Messrs. Chatto and Windus.

## TARTARIN

THREE days later he disembarked at Vitznau, at the foot of the Rigi. As a preliminary canter to get into training for mountaineering, the Rigi attracted him because of its low altitude (1800 mètres, about ten times the height of *Mont Terrible* the most elevated peak of the *Alpes*!) and also because of the splendid panorama which is obtainable from the summit, all the Bernese Alps seated, white and rosy, round the lakes, waiting till the climber shall make his choice, and throw his ice-axe at one of them.

**Tartarin on  
the Rigi**

Sure of being recognised *en route*, and perhaps followed—for it was a weakness of his to fancy he was as well known throughout France as he was celebrated and popular in Tarascon—he had

made a wide *détour* to reach Switzerland, and did not 'harness' himself until he had crossed the frontier. It was a good thing he did not, as his 'armament' could never be contained in a French railway compartment.

But, however commodious the Swiss railway carriages may be, the Alpinist, embarrassed by implements to the use of which he was quite unaccustomed, stabbed people's toes with the point of his alpenstock, harpooned others with his *crampons*, and everywhere he went, in the railway stations, the hotels or on the steamer, he excited as much astonishment as cursing, elbowing, and angry looks, which he could not understand, and which were torture to his candid and affectionate nature. To sum up, there was a leaden sky, heavy clouds, and a pelting rain.

It rained at Bâle, where the houses are washed and re-washed by servants and the water from heaven: it rained at Lucerne, on the quay where the mails and luggage seemed to be just recovered from a wreck; and when he reached Vitznau, on the brink of the Lake of the Four Cantons, there was the same deluge falling upon the green slopes of the Rigi, encircled by black clouds, with torrents dashing over the rocks, making cascades in dust-like spray, dropping from all the stones and from every fir-branch. Tartarin had never seen so much water before.

He entered an *auberge*, and was served with some *café au lait*, honey, and butter, the only really good things that he had so far enjoyed in his journey. Then, once more refreshed, his beard cleared of some honey by means of a corner of his serviette, he made preparations to attempt his first ascent.

'And now,' said he, as he was packing up his *sac*, 'how long will it take to get to the top of the Rigi?'

'An hour or an hour and a quarter, monsieur. But you must make haste; the train will start in five minutes.'

'A train up the Rigi! You are joking!'

Through the leaden-sashed window of the *auberge* she showed him the train which was about to ascend. Two large covered waggons without windows, pushed by a locomotive with a short chimney and with a kettle-shaped body—a monstrous insect

clinging to the mountain, and getting quite out of breath in its attempt to climb the steep sides.

The two Tartarins—the wild and domestic species—were shocked at the idea of ascending in this hideous machine. One thought it ridiculous to climb the Alps in a lift; as for the other, the light bridges which carry the line over chasms, with the prospect of a fall of a thousand feet if the train left the metals ever so little, inspired him with all kinds of sad reflections, which found reason for the establishment of the little cemetery at Vitznau, the tombs in which are squeezed together at the bottom of the slope like the linen displayed in the courtyard of a laundry. Evidently this cemetery is established as a matter of precaution, so that in case of accident travellers may find it quite convenient.

‘I’ll go up on foot,’ said the valiant Tarasconnais. ‘It will give me some exercise. *Zou!*’

And so he went, very much pre-occupied by his alpenstock in the presence of the staff of the *auberge*, who ran to the door shouting to him the way, indications which he never heard. He first pursued an ascending path, paved with great pebbles, of unequal sizes, pointed, as in a southern lane, and bordered with wooden channels to permit the escape of the rain-water.

To right and left are fine orchards, grassy meadows crossed by these same irrigating pipes made from trunks of trees. This arrangement causes a continual splashing of water from the top to the bottom of the mountain, and every time that the ice-axe of the Alpinist caught in the low branches of an oak or chestnut his cap crackled as if subjected to a shower from a water-pot.

‘*Dieu!* what a quantity of water,’ sighed the man of the south. But things became worse when the paved way ceased, for then he was obliged to pick his way through the torrent, to leap from one stone to another, so as not to wet his gaiters. Then the downpour hindered him, penetrating, continuous; and it seemed to get colder as he ascended. When he stopped to take breath, he could hear nothing but the rushing of the water in which he stood half-drowned, and when he turned round he could see the black clouds united to the lake by long fine rods of glass, through which the *chalets* of Vitznau glistened like freshly-varnished toy-houses.

Several men and children passed close by, some with heads bent down and backs curved under the load of white wood containing supplies for some villa or *pension*, whose balconies could be perceived mid-way. 'To the Rigi-Kulm?' asked Tartarin, to assure himself that he was in the right direction; but his extraordinary equipment, and particularly the knitted comforter which shrouded his face, alarmed those he addressed, and every one of them, after staring at him with wide-open eyes, hurried upwards without replying.

These meetings soon became few and far between: the last human being he encountered was an old woman who was washing some linen in the trunk of a tree under the shade of an enormous red umbrella fixed in the ground.

'Rigi-Kulm?' asked the Alpinist.

The old woman raised to him a terrified and idiotic face, bearing a *goitre* which hung from her neck, as large as the bell of a Swiss cow: then, after having taken a long look at him, she burst into a peal of inextinguishable laughter, which stretched her mouth from ear to ear, puckering up her little eyes; and every time that she opened them again, the sight of Tartarin standing before her, his ice-axe on his shoulder, seemed to redouble her mirth.

'*Tron de l'air!*' growled the Tarasconnais, 'it's lucky she's a woman'; and bursting with rage he continued his route, losing his way in a pine wood, where his boots slipped upon the soaking moss.

Beyond that, the scene changed. No more paths, no trees nor pastures. A few mournful slopes, bare, but sustaining great boulders, which he was obliged to scale on hands and knees for fear of falling; morasses full of yellow mud, which he crossed slowly, testing the quagmire with his alpenstock, and lifting his feet like a knife-grinder. Every moment he consulted the compass which hung as a charm to his watch-chain; but, whether owing to the altitude or to the variations of the temperature, the needle seemed defective. He had no means by which he could take his bearings, for the thick yellow fog that prevented him from seeing ten paces in any direction was penetrated by a thick, cold sleet which made the ascent more and more laborious.

Suddenly he halted, the ground was white in front. Take care of your eyes! He had come to the snow-line!

Immediately he drew his glasses from their case and adjusted them firmly! The moment was a solemn one. Somewhat nervous, but proud all the same, Tartarin felt that at one bound he had ascended 3000 feet towards the peaks and their dangers.

He advanced with great precaution, thinking of the crevasses and the *ratures* of which he had read, and in his heart of hearts cursing the people of the *auberge* who had advised him to ascend straight up without a guide. Night would surprise him on the mountain. Could he find a hut, or only the projection of a rock, to shelter himself? Suddenly he perceived, on the wild and desolate platform, a kind of wooden *chalet*, bound with a placard bearing enormous letters, which he deciphered with difficulty: PHO-TO-GRA-PHIE DU RI-GI-KULM. At the same moment the immense hotel with its three hundred windows became visible to him a little farther on between the great lamps, which burned brightly in the fog.

Alphonse Daudet.

*Tartarin on the Alps.*

By kind permission of Messrs. Dent and Son.

## COLLINS

[Mr. Charles Allston Collins was a brother of Mr. Wilkie Collins and married a daughter of Charles Dickens. He began life as a Pre-Raphaelite painter, and wrote many essays and novels.]

MR. PINCHBOLD made no answer, and Mr. Fudge, looking hastily round at him, saw that his friend had raised himself slightly from his seat, and was gazing out on the road before them with such fixed intensity, as caused Mr. Fudge involuntarily to look in the same direction.

The First  
Vision

'What—look—what are they?' asked Mr. Pinchbold, speaking in a breathless voice, and laying his hand on his companion's arm.

Mr. Fudge drew the rein tightly, hardly knowing what he did, and the carriage stopped.

'Are they clouds?' continued Mr. Pinchbold, in the same tone.

Our travellers seemed now to have reached the tops of everything, and had, indeed, climbed to a high place on the Jura mountains. From the point where they stood the road began slightly to slope downwards, and turning by-and-by to the right it was lost over the brow of an abrupt descent.

A little to the left of this turn, and consequently exactly opposite the position occupied by the two Englishmen, there was at a distance of two or three hundred yards a great opening or chasm in the rocks, which rose on either side of it to a great altitude. The chasm was shaped like the letter V. Beyond that chasm there was nothing to be seen.

Nothing? What is that vast sea of dense white, extending—flat as the surface of a lake—for miles and miles away; and yet miles itself from the opening in the rocks between which it shows so strangely? What is that?

And over it, in the remoter distance yet, what forms are those that rise above the dense white sea? What are those vast spectral shapes that show so faint, and yet so clear, so distant, yet so plain? Are they clouds?

No; no clouds, though like those forms in shape and colour, have ever looked like that; no clouds have hung so still, no clouds proclaimed such silence all round, no clouds have struck two human souls with awe and dread such as lay upon the hearts of those two Englishmen, who almost fear to break the stillness as they say together in the hushed voices of those who speak before the dead—

‘THE ALPS!’

It would be difficult—impossible perhaps—to convey to the reader any idea of the effect of the vision imperfectly described in the last chapter, upon the two gentlemen whose fortunes we have been following so long. It is but once in a lifetime—sometimes, perhaps, not that—that men can feel such sensations. Travelling by that road on the diligence with many companions, arriving at La Faucille from Switzerland instead of from France, coming upon this scene even at a time when the rare atmospheric phenomena witnessed by our travellers should be wanting—all would be spoilt.

There may have been something, too, in the mere fact that these two Englishmen came upon this wonderful sight without any preparation, and had not been told that they would come into the presence of the Alps that day at all. Be this as it may, the fact must be recorded, that this sight was more than they could bear to look upon, and that they both, by mutual consent, went aside into the house to recover themselves a little, as a man with his hand upon the coffin-lid of his friend might turn away for a time to gather strength before he looked upon the dead.

Charles Allston Collins.

*A Cruise upon Wheels.*



## VI

## THE ALPS IN HISTORY

## HANNIBAL

[I HAVE here freely translated the famous narrative in Livy (Book XXXI. xxxv.-xxxvii.), who, like Polybius, does not name the pass, and has thus left a very perplexing problem for the modern historian. The controversy has raged almost to the height of passion. Perhaps the most probable suggestion is that of Mr. Douglas Freshfield—the Col de l'Argentière between Barcelonnette and Cuneo (*Alpine Journal*, xi. 267). The Mont Genève, popular with many historians, is not an impossible conjecture (*Geographical Journal*, April 1911, vol. xxxvii. No. 4). A case has been lately argued for the Col de Chapin near to Mont Cenis (*Hannibal's March*, by Spenser Wilkinson.) The utmost that we can say with assurance is that Hannibal crossed a pass in the Western Alps (see Arnold's *Second Punic War*)].

Hannibal's  
Crossing of  
the Alps

ON the ninth day Hannibal's army reached the summit of the main ridge of the Alps, making their way over country where there were few tracks, and where they often lost their way. They were frequently misled by treacherous guides. When they decided not to trust the guides of the country, they often made even worse blunders, for they would march into the wrong valleys and again and again lose their way, from hasty or ill-founded conjectures as to their route. They built a stationary camp on the topmost ridge of the Alps, and there the army, now utterly fatigued by the prolonged toil of marching and fighting, was given a complete rest for two days. During that period a considerable number of the baggage animals who had fallen or slipped by the road found their way into the camp by following the tracks of the army.

While the army was still exhausted with so many difficulties there came a great fall of snow—just at the time in the late autumn

when the constellation of the Pleiades disappears behind the horizon. This fall created a great panic among the soldiers. At day-break the standards moved forward and the army began slowly and dispiritedly to leave their camp, making their way over ground now deep with snow. Weariness and despair were apparent on every face.

Then suddenly Hannibal stepped in front of the standards, and ordered the soldiers to halt on a projecting spur whence there was a wide and distant prospect. He then showed them Italy and the plains of the the River Po that lie beneath the barrier of the Alps. 'You are crossing,' he cried, 'not merely the walls of Italy but even the very walls of Rome itself! All the rest of your journey will be over flat country if not even downhill! In one, or at the most in two, battles you will have in your hands and in your power the very citadel and capital of Italy!'

Then the army began to move forward, and the march became easier because the enemy now relaxed their attacks, and their ambushes became weaker and weaker. At the same time the descent was far more difficult than had been the ascent on the other side of the Alps, for the simple reason that since the road from the summit to the base is shorter on the Italian side, it is necessarily steeper. The path for the most part was precipitous, narrow and slippery. Thus it was very difficult for the soldiers to save themselves from slipping and even more difficult for those who had even slightly slipped to recover their balance. Once a fall began, men and beasts stumbled over one another and perished.

Then the army came to a much narrower defile, with rocks so steep that it was extremely difficult for even a lightly-armed soldier to make his way down, however carefully he might test his holds and however shrewdly he might make use of every twig and bush to help himself in his descent. A hillside which had been already very steep had been converted into a precipice of a 1000 feet in height by a recent landslide. The cavalry, advancing to the edge of this precipice, came to a complete halt as if they had reached the journey's end. Hannibal, seeing that the army had been checked in its march, asked what was the reason of the stoppage. The answer was that they had come to an impassable cliff. Hannibal himself immediately went to the

spot to see for himself. It seemed clear to him that, though the circuit might be long, he must take his army round this difficulty through a trackless and untrodden country. But that route proved impassable. At first indeed, while they were marching through new snow of a moderate depth, lying above unbroken old snow, and as long as the snow was soft and not too deep, their feet found foothold.. But when the new snow was broken up and melted by the passage of so many men and animals, they found themselves marching either on the bare ice beneath or on the soft slush of the melting snow. The result was that the whole army was thrown into a terrible confusion, many of them falling down, as they could not keep themselves erect on the slippery ice and could not recover their footing when fallen. You would see men trying to raise themselves by their hands or by their knees, and then sprawling again full length because they could obtain no grip on the slippery surface. There were no trunks or roots near them by means of which they could secure either a foothold or a handgrip: so they would roll about helplessly on the smooth ice or in the melting snow.

The beasts of burden sometimes cut through even the lowest covering of snow, and falling through it in their struggles they went right through the snow layer, so that often they stuck in the hard thick ice below just as if they had been caught in a trap. At length, after the animals and men had been worn out to no purpose they again pitched the camp on the ridge although it was with the greatest difficulty that they found a spot for that purpose. So much snow had to be dug and cleared away.

Then a body of soldiers was sent to the one spot in this rocky precipice where it seemed possible to force a passage. It was decided to break right through the very rock itself. They proceeded to cut down many of the great trees in the woods around, and, having lopped them, they made a great pile of wood. As soon as the wind had grown strong enough to drive the flame they set the pile on fire. When the rocks were red hot, they poured acid<sup>1</sup> (literally vinegar) upon them, and made them pliable. They then began to cut a way through the hot rock with iron implements,

<sup>1</sup> Pliny says that *acetum* was used in the Spanish mines for softening rocks.

and they so reduced the gradient by easy windings that not merely the beasts of burden but even the elephants could be led down. All this took four days, so that the animals were nearly dead with hunger, for the topmost peaks of the mountains around are bare of vegetation, and whatever pasture there was, was buried in the snow. Lower down there are pleasant valleys, and even sunny hills, and streams of water, and woods, and places more fit for the abode of man. When they reached those spots they put the animals out to graze, and the weary soldiers, now worn out by road-making, were allowed to take a long rest. Three days after that they descended to the plain, finding both the country less rugged and the people more amenable.

*Livy*, Book xxxi. chaps. xxxv.-xxxvii.  
(Copyright Trans.)

### WILLIAM TELL

[All that need be said about the story of William Tell is that there is no contemporary evidence for its truth. This is taken from a narrative in the 'White Book' written at the end of the fifteenth century.]

Now it happened one day that the bailiff, Gessler, went to Ure (Canton Uri), and took it into his head and put up a pole under the lime tree in Ure, and set up a hat upon the pole, and had a servant near it, and made a command whoever passed by there he should bow before the hat, as though the lord were there; and he who did it not, him he would punish, and cause to repent heavily, and the servant was to watch and tell of such an one. Now there was an honest man called Thall; he had also sworn with Stoupacher and his fellows (a reference to a conspiracy previously described in the *White Book*). Now he went rather often to and fro before it. The servant who watched by the hat accused him to the lord. The lord went and had Thall sent, and asked him why he was not obedient to his bidding, and do as he was bidden. Thall spake: 'It happened without malice, for I did not know that it would vex your Grace so highly; for were I witty, then were I called something else, and not the Tall' (the Fool, a pun upon his name); Now Tall was a good archer; he had also pretty children. These the lord sent for, and forced Tall with his servants that Tall must

'The Rise of  
the Swiss  
Republic'

shoot an apple from the head of one of his children ; for the lord set the apple upon the child's head. The lord liked this well, and asked him what he meant by it (that he had put an arrow in his quiver). He answered him, and would gladly have said no more (an obscure passage ; the original is *hett es gern jm besten ver Rett*). The lord would not leave off ; he wanted to know what he meant by it. Tall feared the lord, and was afraid he would kill him. The lord understood his fear and spake ; ' Tell me the truth : I will make thy life safe, and not kill thee.' Then spake Tall : ' Since you have promised me, I will tell you the truth, and it is true : had the shot failed me, so that I had shot my child, I had shot the arrow into you or one of your men.' Then spake the lord : ' Since now this is so, it is true I have promised thee not to kill thee ' ; and had him bound, and said he would put him into a place where he would never more see sun or moon.

From the *White Book of Sarnen* (end of the fifteenth century).

Quoted by Mr. W. D. MacCrackan in

*The Rise of the Swiss Republic.*

Saxon and Co.

[Another story from the *White Book*.]

The First  
Bond

Now at Sarnen a Von Landenberg was bailiff in the name of the empire. He heard that there was one in the Melchi who had a fine yoke of oxen. Then the lord went thither, and sent one of his servants, and had the oxen unyoked and brought to him, and had the poor man told peasants must draw the plow (themselves), and he wanted to have the oxen. The servant did as the lord had bid him, and went thither, and wanted to unyoke the oxen, and drive them to Sarnen. Now the poor man had a son who did not like this, and would not let him have the oxen, and when the servant of the lord laid hands upon the yoke, and wanted to unyoke the oxen, then he smote him with the oxgoad, and broke a finger of the lord's servant. The servant was hurt, and ran home, and complained to his lord of how he had fared. The lord was angry, and wanted to punish the other one. So he had to flee ; the lord sent for his father and had him brought to Sarnen to his house, and put out his eyes and took from him what he had and did him much harm.

In those days there was an upright man in Alzellen who had a pretty wife, and he who was lord there at the time wanted to have the woman whether she would or not. The lord came to Alzellen into her house; the husband was in the forest. The lord forced the woman to make ready a bath for him, and said she must bathe with him. The woman prayed God to keep her from shame, and thought to herself: God never leaves his people who call upon Him in need. The husband came in the meantime, and asked her what ailed her. She spake: 'The lord is here and forced me to make ready a bath for him.' The husband grew angry, and went in and smote the lord to death in that hour with an axe, and delivered his wife from shame.

In those same days there was a man in Swiz (Schwiz) called Stoupacher (Stauffacher) who lived at Steinen, this side the bridge; he had built a pretty stone house. Now at that time a Gesler (Gessler) was bailiff there, in the name of the empire; he came one day, and rode by there, and called to Stoupacher, and asked him whose the pretty dwelling was. Stoupacher answered him and spake sadly: 'Gracious lord, it is yours, and mine in fief,' and dared not say it was his, so greatly did he fear the lord. The lord rode away. Now Stoupacher was a wise man and well to do. He had also a wise wife, and thought over the matter, and had great grief, and was full of fear before the lord, lest he should take his life and his goods from him. His wife, she noticed it and did as women do, and would like to have known what was the matter with him, or why he was sad; but he denied her that. At last she overwhelmed him with great entreaty, that he might let her know his matter, and spake: 'Be so good and tell me thy need; although it is said women give cold counsels, who knows what God will do?' She begged him so often in her trusting way, that he told her what his grief was. She went and strengthened him with words and spake: 'There'll be some good plan'; and asked him if he knew any one in Ure (Uri) who was so trusted by him that he might confide his need to him, and told him of the family of Fürst and of Zer Fraowen (Zur Frauen). He answered her and spake: 'Yea, he knew them well.' He thought about the counsel of his wife, and went to Ure, and stayed there, until he found one who

had also a like grief. She had also bid him ask in Unterwalden ; for she thought, there were people there also, who did not like such tyranny.

Now the poor man's son had fled from Unterwalden and was nowhere safe, he who had smitten in twain the finger of the servant of Von Landenberg with the oxgoad ; for which his father had been blinded by the lord, and he felt sorry for his father, and he would have liked to avenge him. That one also came to Stoupacher, and so there came three of them together, Stoupacher of Schwitz (Schwiz) and one of the Fürsts of Ure, and he from Melche in Unterwalden, and each confided his need and grief to the other, and took counsel, and they took an oath together. And when the three had sworn to each other, then they sought and found one from *nid dem wald* (Nidwalden) he also swore with them, and they found now and again secretly men whom they drew to themselves, and swore to each other faith and truth, both to risk life and goods, and to defend themselves against the lords, and when they wanted to do and undertake anything, they went by the Myten Stein at night to a place (which) is called *jm Rüdli* (Rütli). There they met together and each one of them brought men with him, in whom they could trust, and continued that some time, and met nowhere else in those days, save in the Rüdli.

[Also from Mr. MacCrackan's book.]

#### SEMPACH

Arnold  
Winkelried

THE battle-ground of Sempach, like that of Morgarten, is not situated amongst the high Alps, but in the undulating lowlands which lead up to them. A ten-mile ride in the train from Luzern and a short walk from the rustic station will take you to the gates of the miniature walled town of Sempach, a quaint survival of the middle ages, practically untouched by the march of time. Take the road which climbs the hill in a north-easterly direction towards Hildisrieden. In something like half an hour you will reach an uneven plateau, where a road joins your own from the west. This is the battle-ground of Sempach. A chapel stands by the wayside to mark the spot where Duke Leopold met his death : in the open field a rude pyramid of granite, surrounded by pine saplings, bears



this legend: '*Hier Hat Winkelried den Seinen Eine Gasse Gemacht, 1386.*' To the south, across the sloping field, broken by little brooks into rough divisions, lies a tract of forest, known as the Meierholz, where the Confederates lay in hiding on that eventful day, waiting for the arrival of the Austrians from Sursee.

As soon as war had been declared, the various states of the Confederation had taken steps to put their frontiers into a defensive condition, Bern alone remaining inactive and preserving an expectant attitude. About fifteen hundred troops marched to Zurich to defend that city, because it was generally believed that Leopold would select it for his principal attack; but at the last moment news came that the Austrians were advancing upon Luzern, and the troops hastened to take up a position from which they could surprise Leopold on the march. Thus it happened that when the Austrians reached the uneven plateau, which has been described above, the battle came upon them as a complete surprise, and in a locality ill-suited for the evolutions of their cavalry. The majority of the knights dismounted, sent their horses and squires to one side, and stationed themselves in long and deep lines, clad in heavy armour, and holding before them the lances they were accustomed to wield on horseback. The rest, amongst whom rode Leopold himself, remained behind to act as a reserve with the contingents sent by Austria's partisans. According to the most reliable accounts, some adventurous young noblemen, eager to win their spurs that day, straightway rushed upon the Confederates, who were drawn up in a wedge-shaped column peculiar to them, and were armed with their famous halberds and a variety of short weapons.

There can be no question that the first part of the battle proved most unfavourable to the Confederates. It appears that their short weapons were useless against the long spears which confronted them, for they could not reach the Austrians to strike them, and could, at best, only shatter the wooden shafts. In vain they rushed against the bristling array, in vain they attempted to break through that solid phalanx; the foremost were invariably pierced through before they could make use of their short weapons. By degrees the Austrians were pressing the Confederates off



the field, and victory seemed assured to the noblemen against the peasants.

Suddenly, however, the tide of battle turned ; defeat was changed to triumph as though by a miracle. How this came about is a problem which has exercised the minds of many historians, for it is at this point that certain versions introduce the much-contested episode of Arnold Winkelried, while others ascribe the cause of this good fortune to a change of tactics adopted by the Confederates, or to the hot July sun, acting upon the heavy armour in which the Austrians were encased. Probably these circumstances affected the issue of the battle to a certain extent ; but there seems to be room for the heroic deed of Winkelried as well. In the words of the anonymous chronicler who is the first to mention the subject : 'To this (victory) a trusty man amongst the Confederates helped us. When he saw that things were going so badly, and that the lords with their lances and spears always thrust down the foremost before they could be touched by the halberds, then did that honest man and true rush forward, and seize as many spears as he could and press them down, so that the Confederates smote off all the spears with their halberds, and so reached the enemy.'

As soon as the Confederates had succeeded in breaking through the enemy's line and were at close quarters, whatever the manner in which this was accomplished, their short weapons at once became superior to the enemy's long spears, and their light equipment gave them a great advantage over the knights, whose movements were hampered by heavy armour. The Austrian knights, encased in plates of iron and steel, half suffocated under heavy helmets, heated by the broiling sun ; their legs, covered with greaves, could not long withstand the light-footed peasants. Austria's standard was seen to sway to and fro, threatening to fall, and the cry went up, 'Austria to the rescue !' Then Leopold, who had been watching the fray from his post amongst the reserves, sprang forward, unmindful of his followers' prayers, plunged into the thick of the fight to save the honour of his house, and, after a brief struggle, fell himself beneath the strokes of the victorious Confederates. Then ensued a moment of indescribable confusion, for the mounted knights, seeing their leader's fate, fled

precipitately, while the dismounted ones called aloud for their squires and horses. But, alas, they, too, had fled; and thus abandoned by their friends, weak with exhaustion, and imprisoned in their armour, these warriors perished an easy prey to the relentless peasants.

When all was over, the Confederates, as was their wont, fell upon their knees to sing a Kyrie, and to thank God for the victory. Then they remained three days upon the battlefield, to gather up the spoils, to bury their dead, and to be ready to meet the enemy should they return.

Besides Leopold the Austrians mourned the loss of a host of nobles, whose names are carefully recorded in various annals, in all more than six hundred of the best blood of Swabia, and the lands subject to the Habsburg family. The victors also lost some of their best leaders, notably Conrad der Frauen, the Landammann of Uri, and Peter von Gundoldingen, late Avoyer (Schultheiss) of Luzern. Great booty in costly weapons, garments and jewels fell into their hands, of which they could hardly understand the uses or appreciate the value. The museum of Luzern still contains a few authenticated trophies captured in the battle, but most of the spoils were scattered about, and are of course extremely difficult to identify at this late date.

W. D. MacCrackan.  
*The Rise of the Swiss Republic.*  
Saxon and Co.

## CHILLON

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless Mind!  
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art!  
For there thy habitation is the heart—  
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;  
And when thy sons to fetters are consign'd—  
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom—  
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,  
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.  
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,

**The Prisoner  
of Chillon**

And thy sad floor an altar ; for 'twas trod,  
 Until his very steps have left a trace  
 Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,  
 By Bonnivard ! May none those marks efface !  
 For they appeal from tyranny to God.

When this poem was composed, I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard, or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues. Some account of his life will be found below, furnished me by the kindness of a citizen of that republic, which is still proud of the memory of a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom :—

François de Bonnivard, son of Louis de Bonnivard, a native of Seysel, and Seigneur of Lunes, was born in 1496. He was educated at Turin. In 1510, his uncle, Jean-Reiné de Bonnivard, resigned to him the Priory of Saint-Victor, which adjoins the walls of Geneva, and which was a considerable living.

This great man—Bonnivard merits the title from his greatness of soul, his integrity, the nobility of his intentions, the wisdom of his counsels, the courage of his actions, the extent of his learning, and the brilliancy of his wit—this great man, who must necessarily excite the admiration of all who are capable of appreciating heroic virtue, will always inspire the most lively gratitude in the hearts of those Genevese who love Geneva. Bonnivard was one of its firmest supports : to protect the liberty of our republic, he feared not to lose his own ; he sacrificed his ease, he despised his wealth ; he neglected nothing to assure the happiness of the country he had honoured by his adoption. He loved it as the most zealous of its citizens ; he served it with the intrepidity of a hero, and he wrote its history with the simplicity of a philosopher and the ardour of a patriot.

He says in the commencement of his *History of Geneva*, that 'as soon as he began the study of History, he felt himself carried away by his love for Republics, the interests of which he always espoused.' It was without doubt this love of liberty that made him adopt Geneva as his country.

Bonnivard, while yet young, boldly declared himself the defender of Geneva against the Duke of Savoy and the Bishop.

In 1519 he became the martyr of his country. The Duke of Savoy having entered Geneva with five hundred men, Bonnivard, apprehensive of his resentment, endeavoured to return to Fribourg to escape the threatened peril; but he was betrayed by two men who accompanied him, and conducted by order of the Prince to Grolée, where for two years he remained a prisoner.

Bonnivard was unfortunate in his travels. As his misfortunes had not slackened his zeal for Geneva, he was still a redoubtable enemy to those who threatened it, and accordingly he became liable to their offence. He was met in 1530 on the Jura by robbers, who stripped him of 'everything,' and gave him up again to the Duke of Savoy; this prince imprisoned him in the Château of Chillon, where he remained without any judicial enquiry until 1536; he was then delivered by the Bernois, who took possession of the Pays de Vaud.

Bonnivard, on his deliverance from captivity, had the pleasure of finding Geneva free and reformed; the Republic hastened to testify its gratitude to him, and to recompense him for all he had suffered in its behalf; it bestowed on him the rights of citizenship in the month of June, 1536; it conferred on him the house formerly inhabited by the Vicar-General, and assigned to him a pension of two hundred gold crowns, as long as he should sojourn in Geneva. He was admitted into the Council of Two Hundred in 1537.

Bonnivard did not cease being useful to the Republic; after having laboured to make Geneva free, he succeeded in making it tolerant. He prevailed upon the council to grant to the Calvinists and peasants a sufficient time for examining the propositions which were made to them, and he succeeded by his gentleness. Christianity is always preached with success when it is preached with charity.

Bonnivard was learned; his manuscripts, which are in the public library, prove that he had studied the Latin classics, and that he had penetrated the depths of theology and history. This great man loved the sciences, and believed they would constitute the glory of Geneva: accordingly he neglected nothing to establish them there; in 1551 he gave his library to the people: it was the commencement

of our public library. His books consisted of those rare and beautiful editions of the fifteenth century which are to be seen in our collection. Finally, during the same year, this good patriot appointed the Republic his heir, on condition that it should employ his wealth in supporting the college, of which the foundation was then projected.

It is probable that Bonnivard died in 1570; but this fact cannot be certified, as an hiatus occurs in the Necrology, from the month of July 1570 to 1571. [Note by Byron.]<sup>1</sup>

## I

My hair is grey, but not with years;  
 Nor grew it white  
 In a single night,<sup>2</sup>  
 As men's have grown from sudden fears:  
 My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,  
 But rusted with a vile repose,  
 For they have been a dungeon's spoil,  
 And mine has been the fate of those  
 To whom the goodly earth and air  
 Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare;  
 But this was for my father's faith  
 I suffer'd chains and courted death:  
 That father perish'd at the stake  
 For tenets he would not forsake;  
 And for the same his lineal race  
 In darkness found a dwelling-place.  
 We were seven—who now are one,  
 Six in youth, and one in age,  
 Finish'd as they had begun,  
 Proud of Persecution's rage:

<sup>1</sup> Byron has described here the imprisonment of an imaginary captive, taking the name of a real man, but utterly distorting and adorning his real history. See Mr. W. A. B. Coolidge in *The Alpine Guide*, vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> Ludovico Sforza, and others. The same is asserted of Marie Antoinette's, the wife of Louis XVI., though not in quite so short a period. Grief is said to have the same effect; to such, and not to fear, this change in *her* was to be attributed. (Byron's Note.)

One in fire, and two in field,  
Their belief with blood have seal'd,  
Dying as their father died,  
For the God their foes denied ;  
Three were in a dungeon cast,  
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

## II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,  
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old ;  
There are seven columns, massy and grey,  
Dim with a dull imprison'd ray,  
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,  
And through the crevice and the cleft  
Of the thick wall is fallen and left ;  
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,  
Like a marsh's meteor lamp :  
And in each pillar there is a ring,  
And in each ring there is a chain ;  
That iron is a cankering thing,  
For in these limbs its teeth remain,  
With marks that will not wear away,  
Till I have done with this new day,  
Which now is painful to these eyes,  
Which have not seen the sun so rise  
For years—I cannot count them o'er !  
I lost their long and heavy score  
When my last brother droop'd and died,  
And I lay living by his side.

## III

They chain'd us each to a column stone,  
And we were three—yet each alone.  
We could not move a single pace,  
We could not see each other's face,  
But with that pale and livid light  
That made us strangers in our sight :

And thus together, yet apart,  
 Fetter'd in hand, but joined in heart,  
 'Twas still some solace in the dearth  
 Of the pure elements of earth,  
 To hearken to each other's speech,  
 And each turn comforter to each  
 With some new hope, or legend old,  
 Or song heroically bold ;  
 But even these at length grew cold.  
 Our voices took a dreary tone,  
 An echo of the dungeon-stone,  
     A grating sound—not full and free  
     As they of yore were wont to be :  
     It might be fancy—but to me  
 They never sounded like our own.

## IV

I was the eldest of the three ;  
     And to uphold and cheer the rest  
     I ought to do—and did—my best,  
 And each did well in his degree.  
     The youngest, whom my father loved,  
 Because our mother's brow was given  
 To him—with eyes as blue as heaven—  
     For him my soul was sorely moved.  
 And truly might it be distrest  
 To see such bird in such a nest ;  
 For he was beautiful as day—  
     (When day was beautiful to me  
     As to young eagles, being free)—  
     A polar day, which will not see  
 A sunset till its summer's gone.  
     Its sleepless summer of long light,  
 The snow-clad offspring of the sun :  
     And thus he was as pure and bright,  
 And in his natural spirit gay,  
 With tears for nought but others' ills,

And then they flow'd like mountain rills,  
Unless he could assuage the woe  
Which he abhorr'd to view below.

## V

The other was as pure of mind,  
But form'd to combat with his kind ;  
Strong in his frame, and of a mood  
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood  
And perish'd in the foremost rank  
With joy—but not in chains to pine.  
His spirit wither'd with their clank,  
I saw it silently decline—  
And so perchance in sooth did mine ;  
But yet I forced it on to cheer  
Those relics of a home so dear :  
He was a hunter of the hills,  
Had follow'd there the deer and wolf ;  
To him this dungeon was a gulf,  
And fetter'd feet the worst of ills.

## VI

Lake Lemman lies by Chillon's walls :  
A thousand feet in depth below  
Its massy waters meet and flow ;  
Thus much the fathom-line was sent  
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Château de Chillon is situated between Clarens and Villeneuve, which last is at one extremity of the Lake of Geneva. On its left are the entrances of the Rhone, and opposite are the heights of Meillerie and the range of Alps above Boveret and St. Gingo.

Near it, on a hill behind, is a torrent ; below it, washing its walls, the lake has been fathomed to the depth of 800 feet (French measure) ; within it are a range of dungeons, in which the early reformers, and subsequently prisoners of state, were confined. Across one of the vaults is a beam black with age, on which we were informed that the condemned were formerly executed. In the cells are seven pillars, or rather eight, one being half merged in the wall ; in



Which round about the wave enthalls :  
 A double dungeon wall and wave  
 Have made—and like a living grave.  
 Below the surface of the lake  
 The dark vault lies wherein we lay,  
 We heard it ripple night and day :  
     Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd ;  
 And I have felt the winter's spray  
 Wash through the bars when winds were high,  
 And wanton in the happy sky ;  
     And then the very rock hath rock'd,  
     And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,  
 Because I could have smiled to see  
 The death that would have set me free.

## VII

I said my nearer brother pined,  
 I said his mighty heart declined,  
 He loathed and put away his food :  
 It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,  
 For we were used to hunters' fare,  
 And for the like had little care :  
 The milk drawn from the mountain goat  
 Was changed for water from the moat ;  
 Our bread was such as captives' tears  
 Have moisten'd many a thousand years,  
 Since man first pent his fellow-men  
 Like brutes within an iron den :  
 But what were these to us or him ?  
 These wasted not his heart or limb :  
 My brother's soul was of that mould

some of these are rings for the fetters and the fettered. In the pavement, the steps of Bonnivard have left their traces : he was confined here several years.

It is by this castle that Rousseau has fixed the catastrophe of his *Héloïse*, in the rescue of one of her children by Julie from the water ; the shock of which, and the illness produced by the immersion, is the cause of her death.

The château is large, and seen along the lake for a great distance. The walls are white. (Byron's note).

Which in a palace had grown cold,  
Had his free breathing been denied  
The range of the steep mountain's side.  
But why delay the truth?—he died.  
I saw, and could not hold his head,  
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead—  
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,  
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain  
He died ; and they unlock'd his chain,  
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave  
Even from the cold earth of our cave.  
I begg'd them, as a boon, to lay  
His corse in dust whereon the day  
Might shine ; it was a foolish thought,  
But then within my brain it wrought,  
That even in death his free-born breast  
In such a dungeon could not rest.  
I might have spared my idle prayer :  
They coldly laugh'd—and laid him there :  
The flat and turfless earth above  
The being we so much did love ;  
His empty chain above it leant,—  
Such murder's fitting monument !

## VIII

But he, the favourite and the flower,  
Most cherished since his natal hour,  
His mother's image in fair face,  
The infant love of all his race,  
His martyr'd father's dearest thought,  
My latest care, for whom I sought  
To hoard my life, that his might be  
Less wretched now, and one day free :  
He, too, who yet had held untired  
A spirit natural or inspired—  
He, too, was struck, and day by day  
Was wither'd on the stalk away.

O God ! it is a fearful thing  
 To see the human soul take wing  
 In any shape, in any mood :—  
 I've seen it rushing forth in blood,  
 I've seen it on the breaking ocean  
 Strive with a swoll'n convulsive motion,  
 I've seen the sick and ghastly bed  
 Of Sin delirious with its dread :  
 But these were horrors—this was woe  
 Unmix'd with such,—but sure and slow.  
 He faded, and so calm and meek,  
 So softly worn, so sweetly weak,  
 So tearless, yet so tender,—kind,  
 And grieved for those he left behind ;  
 With all the while a cheek whose bloom  
 Was as a mockery of the tomb,  
 Whose tints as gently sunk away  
 As a departing rainbow's ray ;  
 An eye of most transparent light,  
 That almost made the dungeon bright,  
 And not a word of murmur—not  
 A groan o'er his untimely lot ;—  
 A little talk of better days,  
 A little hope my own to raise,  
 For I was sunk in silence—lost  
 In this last loss, of all the most ;  
 And then the sighs he would suppress  
 Of fainting nature's feebleness,  
 More slowly drawn, grew less and less :  
 I listen'd, but I could not hear ;  
 I call'd, for I was wild with fear :  
 I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread  
 Would not be thus admonished.  
 I call'd, and thought I heard a sound—  
 I burst my chain with one strong bound,  
 And rush'd to him ; I found him not ;  
 I only stirr'd in this black spot,

*I* only lived—*I* only drew  
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew ;  
The last—the soul,—the dearest link  
Between me and the eternal brink,  
Which bound me to my failing race,  
Was broken in this fatal place.  
One on the earth and one beneath—  
My brothers—both had ceased to breathe :  
I took that hand which lay so still ;  
Alas, my own was full as chill ;  
I had not strength to stir, or strive,  
But felt that I was still alive—  
A frantic feeling, when we know  
That what we love shall ne'er be so.

I know not why  
I could not die ;  
I had no earthly hope—but faith,  
And that forbade a selfish death.

## IX

What next befell me then and there  
I know not well—I never knew :—  
First came the loss of light, and air,  
And then of darkness too.  
I had no thought, no feeling—none ;  
Among the stones I stood a stone,  
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,  
As shrubless crags within the mist ;  
For all was blank, and bleak, and grey,  
It was not night—it was not day ;  
It was not even the dungeon-light,  
So hateful to my heavy sight,  
But vacancy absorbing space,  
And fixedness—without a place :  
There were no stars,—no earth,—no time,  
No check,—no change,—no good,—no crime,

But silence, and a stirless breath  
 Which neither was of life nor death ;  
 A sea of stagnant idleness,  
 Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless.

## X

A light broke in upon my brain—  
 It was the carol of a bird :  
 It ceased, and then it came again,  
     The sweetest song ear ever heard ;  
 And mine was thankful, till my eyes  
 Ran over with the glad surprise,  
 And they that moment could not see  
 I was the mate of misery.  
 But then by dull degrees came back  
 My senses to their wonted track :  
 I saw the dungeon walls and floor  
 Close slowly round me as before ;  
 I saw the glimmer of the sun  
 Creeping as it before had done,  
 But through the crevice where it came  
 That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,  
     And tamer than upon the tree ;  
 A lovely bird, with azure wings,  
 And song that said a thousand things,  
     And seem'd to say them all for me !  
 I never saw its like before,  
 I ne'er shall see its likeness more :  
 It seem'd, like me, to want a mate,  
 But was not half so desolate ;  
 And it was come to love me when  
 None lived to love me so again,  
 And cheering from my dungeon's brink,  
 Had brought me back to feel and think.  
 I know not if it late were free,  
     Or broke its cage to perch on mine ;

But knowing well captivity,  
Sweet bird, I could not wish for thine !  
Or if it were, in wingèd guise,  
A visitant from Paradise ;  
For—Heaven forgive that thought ! the while  
Which made me both to weep and smile ;  
I sometimes deem'd that it might be  
My brother's soul come down to me ;  
But then at last away it flew,  
And then 'twas mortal—well I knew,  
For he would never thus have flown,  
And left me twice so doubly lone—  
Lone,—as the corse within its shroud ;  
Lone,—as a solitary cloud—  
A single cloud on a sunny day,  
While all the rest of heaven is clear,  
A frown upon the atmosphere,  
That hath no business to appear  
When skies are blue and earth is gay.

## XI

A kind of change came in my fate,  
My keepers grew compassionate :  
I know not what has made them so,  
They were inured to sights of woe ;  
But so it was : my broken chain  
With links unfasten'd did remain,  
And it was liberty to stride  
Along my cell from side to side,  
And up and down, and then athwart,  
And tread it over every part,  
And round the pillars one by one,  
Returning where my walk begun ;  
Avoiding only, as I trod,  
My brothers' graves without a sod ;  
For if I thought with heedless tread  
My step profaned their lowly bed,

My breath came gaspingly and thick,  
And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick.

## XII

I made a footing in the wall,  
It was not therefrom to escape,  
For I had buried one and all,  
Who loved me in a human shape ;  
And the whole earth would henceforth be  
A wider prison unto me :  
No child—no sire—no kin had I,  
No partner in my misery,  
I thought of this, and I was glad,  
For thought of them had made me mad :  
But I was curious to ascend  
To my barr'd windows, and to bend  
Once more, upon the mountains high,  
The quiet of a loving eye.

## XIII

I saw them—and they were the same,  
They were not changed like me in frame ;  
I saw their thousand years of snow  
On high—their wide long lake below,  
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow ;  
I heard the torrents leap and gush  
O'er channell'd rock and broken bush ;  
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,  
And whiter sails go skimming down ;  
And then there was a little isle<sup>1</sup>  
Which in my very face did smile,  
The only one in view ;

<sup>1</sup> Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island ; the only one I could perceive, in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees (I think not above three), and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view. (Byron's note.)

A small green isle, it seem'd no more,  
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor ;  
But in it there were three tall trees,  
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,  
And by it there were waters flowing,  
And on it there were young flowers growing,  
Of gentle breath and hue,  
The fish swam by the castle wall,  
And they seem'd joyous each and all ;  
The eagle rode the rising blast,  
Methought he never flew so fast  
As then to me he seem'd to fly ;  
And then new tears came in my eye,  
And I felt troubled—and would fain  
I had not left my recent chain.  
And when I did descend again,  
The darkness of my dim abode  
Fell on me as a heavy load ;  
It was as is a new-dug grave,  
Closing o'er one we sought to save ;  
And yet my glance, too much opprest,  
Had almost need of such a rest.

## XIV

It might be months, or years, or days,  
I kept no count—I took no note,  
I had no hope my eyes to raise,  
And clear them of their dreary mote ;  
At last men came to set me free,  
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where,  
It was at length the same to me,  
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,  
I learn'd to love despair.  
And thus, when they appear'd at last,  
And all my bonds aside were cast,  
These heavy walls to me had grown  
A hermitage—and all my own !



And half I felt as they were come  
 To tear me from a second home :  
 With spiders I had friendship made,  
 And watch'd them in their sullen trade,  
 Had seen the mice by moonlight play,  
 And why should I feel less than they?  
 We were all inmates of one place.  
 And I, the monarch of each race,  
 Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell !  
 In quiet we had learn'd to dwell ;  
 My very chains and I grew friends,  
 So much a long communion tends  
 To make us what we are : even I  
 Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

Byron.  
*The Prisoner of Chillon.*

### CELLINI

[This account of a journey in the Alps, taken from Benvenuto Cellini's famous diary, gives a very vivid picture of the sufferings and pains of Alpine travel in the sixteenth century.]

#### Cellini's Alpine Trip

I took the road through the Grisons, for none of the others were safe on account of the war, and crossed the Albula and Bernina mountains. It was the 8th of May, but a great deal of snow lay on them still, and it was at the greatest peril of our lives we traversed these two mountain passes. On the other side we stopped at a place which, if I remember rightly, is called Wallenstadt, and here we put up. That night there arrived a Florentine courier called Busbacca. I had heard him spoken of as a man of credit, and capable in his profession, and did not know he had fallen into disrepute by his rascally deeds. When he saw me at the inn, he called me by my name, told me he was going on important business to Lyons, and begged me to be kind enough to lend him money for the journey. I told him I had no money to lend him, but if he liked to come with me I would pay his way to Lyons. The rascal shed tears and cajoled me very cleverly, saying, 'When it is a question of public importance, and a poor

courier is in want of money, a man like you is bound to help him.' Besides, he said, he was carrying things of the utmost consequence from Messer Filippo Strozzi. Now he had with him a leather case, and he whispered in my ear that in it was a silver beaker containing jewels to the value of many thousand ducats, besides the important letters from Messer Filippo Strozzi. Whereupon I said to him to let me hide the jewels on his person, which would be less dangerous than carrying them in that beaker, which he might hand over to me. It might be worth about ten crowns, I thought; but I would give him five-and-twenty on it. At this the courier said he would come along with me, since he could not do better. To give up the cup would be to his discredit.

So it was arranged: and setting off next morning, we came to a lake between Wallenstadt and Wesen. This lake is fifteen miles long, with Wesen at one end of it. When I saw the boats on the water, I was frightened, for they were made of pine trunks, not very large, and by no means solid, and neither nailed together nor tarred. And I had never ventured to embark on one, if I had not seen four German gentlemen with their four horses get into just such another. Indeed I would sooner have turned back; but I thought to myself, seeing their stupid indifference, these German waters do not drown as do ours in Italy. But my two young lads said to me, 'Benvenuto, it is a perilous thing for us to get into this boat with four horses.' 'Don't you see,' I replied, 'you cowards, that those four gentlemen have done the like before us, and that they are going off laughing? If it were wine, I should say it was for the pleasure of boozing, but since it is water, I know they do not want to be swallowed up in it any more than we do.' The lake was fifteen miles long and about three wide. On one side was a very high mountain, seamed with cavernous precipices, on the other a green plain. When we had gone about four miles a storm came up, and the rowers asked us to help with the oars. I signed to them to put us out on the farther bank, but they said it was not possible, for there was not water enough, and there were sand banks which would wreck the boat and drown us all. Then again they begged us to assist them, and each man called to the other for help. Seeing them in this desperate condition, I put the bridle

on the neck of my horse, a very clever animal, and took hold of the halter with my left hand. The creature, which had the intelligence of his kind, understood my meaning when I turned its face towards the fresh grass, namely, that he should swim and drag me along with him. Just then so huge a wave came up that our boat was under water. 'Have mercy, my father,' called Ascanio, 'help me!' He was just throwing himself upon me, when I put my hand to my dagger, and told them all they were to do as I had taught them, for the horses would save their lives, and I hope to escape, too, by the same means. Then I told Ascanio that if he threw himself upon me again I should kill him. So we went on for several miles through this mortal peril.

Benvenuto Cellini.

#### WALPOLE AND GRAY

[In the autumn of 1739, immediately after leaving King's College, Cambridge, young Mr. Horatio Walpole, fourth son of Sir Robert, and Mr. Thomas Gray, destined to become one of the most famous poets in the English language, went for the 'Grand Tour' on the Continent. They visited the Chartreuse Monastery together. The following two extracts give their impressions of that visit from their different points of view, written in letters to friends at home.]

TO RICHARD WEST, ESQ.

From a hamlet among the mountains of Savoy.

*Sept. 28th, 1739. N.S.*

A Famous  
Alpine  
Journey

PRECIPICES, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings, Salvator Rosa—the pomp of our park and the meekness of our palace! Here we are, the lonely lords of glorious desolate prospects. I have kept a sort of resolution which I made, of not writing to you as long as I stayed in France: I am now a quarter of an hour out of it, and write to you. Mind, 'tis three months since we heard from you. I begin this letter among the clouds; where I shall finish, my neighbour Heaven probably knows: 'tis an odd wish in a mortal letter, to hope not to finish it on this side the atmosphere. You will have a billet tumble to you from the stars when you least think of it; and that I should write it, too! Lord! how potent

that sounds! But I am to undergo many transmigrations before I come to 'yours ever.' Yesterday I was a shepherd of Dauphiné; to-day, an Alpine savage; to-morrow, a Carthusian monk; and Friday, a Swiss Calvinist. I have one quality which I find remains with me in all the worlds, and in all æthers; I brought it with me from your world, and am admired for it in this; 'tis my esteem for you: this is a common thought among you, and you will laugh at it, but it is new here; as new to remember one's friends in the world one has left, as for you to remember those you have lost.

AIX IN SAVOY.

Sept. 30th.

WE are this minute come in here, and here's an awkward abbé this minute come in to us. I asked him if he would sit down. *Oui, oui, oui*. He has ordered us a radish soup for supper, and has brought a chess-board to play with Mr. Conway. I have left 'em in the act, and am set down to write to you. Did you ever see anything like the prospect we saw yesterday? I never did. We rode three leagues to see the Grande-Chartreuse; expected bad roads and the finest convent in the kingdom. We were disappointed pro and con. The building is large and plain, and has nothing remarkable but its primitive simplicity: they entertained us in the neatest manner, with eggs, pickled salmon, dried fish, conserves, cheese, butter, grapes, and figs, and pressed us mightily to lie there. We tumbled into the hands of a lay-brother, who unluckily having the charge of the meal and bran, showed us little besides. They desired us to set down our names in the list of strangers, where, among others, we found two mottoes of our countrymen, for whose stupidity and brutality we blushed. The first was of Sir J—— D——, who had wrote down the first stanza of *Justum & tenacem*, altering the last line to *Mente qualis Carthusiana*. The second was of one D——, *Coelum ipsum petimus stultitiâ*; & *hic ventri indico bellum*. The Goth!—But the road, West, the road! winding round a prodigious mountain, and surrounded with others, all shagged with hanging woods, obscured with pines, or lost in clouds! Below, a torrent breaking through cliffs, and tumbling through fragments of rocks! Sheets of cascades forcing their silver speed down channelled precipices, and hastening

into the roughened river at the bottom! Now and then an old foot-bridge, with a broken rail, a leaning cross, a cottage, or the ruin of a hermitage! This sounds too bombast and too romantic to one who has not seen it, too cold for one that has. If I could send you my letter post between two lovely tempests that echoed each other's wrath, you might have some idea of this noble roaring scene, as you were reading it. Almost on the summit, upon a fine verdure, but without any prospect, stands the Chartreuse. We stayed there two hours, rode back through this charming picture, wished for a painter, wished to be poets! Need I tell you we wished for you? Good-night!

Horatio Walpole.

TO MRS. DOROTHY GRAY

LYONS.

*October 13th, N.S., 1739.*

. . . It is a fortnight since we set out from hence upon a little excursion to Geneva. We took the longest road, which lies through Savoy, on purpose to see a famous monastery, called the Grande Chartreuse, and had no reason to think our time lost. After having travelled seven days very slow (for we did not change horses it being impossible for a chaise to go post in these roads) we arrived at a little village among the mountains of Savoy, called Echelles; from thence we proceeded on horses, who are used to the way, to the mountain of the Chartreuse. It is six miles to the top; the road runs winding up it commonly not six feet broad, on one hand is the rock with woods of pine trees hanging overhead, on the other a monstrous precipice, almost perpendicular, at the bottom of which rolls a torrent, that sometimes tumbling among the fragments of stone that have fallen from on high and sometimes precipitating itself down vast descents with a noise like thunder, which is still made greater by the echo from the mountains on the other side; the cascades that in many places throw themselves from the very summit down into the vale, and the river, yellow; and many other particulars impossible to describe; you will conclude that we had no occasion to repent our pains. This place St. Bruno chose to retire to, and upon its very top founded the aforesaid convent which is the superior of the whole order. When

we came there the two fathers who are commissioned to entertain strangers (for the rest must neither speak one to another, nor to any one else) received us very kindly, and set before us a repast of dried fish, eggs, butter, and fruits, all excellent in their kind and extremely neat. They pressed us to stay the night there, and to stay some days with them, but this we could not do, so they led us about their house, which is, you must think, like a little city, for there are one hundred fathers, besides three hundred servants, that make their clothes, grind their corn, press their wine, and do everything among themselves. The whole is quite orderly and simple, nothing of finery, but the wonderful decency and the strange situation more than supply the place of it. In the evening we descended by the same way, passing through clouds that were then forming themselves on the mountain side. . . .

Thomas Gray.

TO RICHARD WEST

TURIN.

*November 16th, N.S., 1739.*

THE palace here in town is the very quintessence of gilding and looking-glass, inlaid floors, carved panels, and painting wherever they could leave a brush. I own I have not, as yet, anywhere met with those grand and simple works of Art, that are to amaze one, and whose sight one is to be the better for! but those of Nature have astonished me beyond expression. In our little journey up to the Grand Chartreuse I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining. Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would drive an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits there at noonday. You have death perpetually before your eyes, only so very far removed as to compose the mind without frightening it. I am well persuaded St. Bruno was a man of no common genius, to choose such a situation for his retirement. You may believe Abelard and Heloise were not forgotten on this occasion. If I do not mistake I saw you, too, every now and again at a distance in among the trees.

You seemed to call me from the other side of the precipice, but the noise of the river was so great, that I really could not distinguish what you said; it seemed to have a cadence like verse. In your next you will be so good to let me know what it was. The week we have since passed among the Alps has not equalled the single day upon that mountain, because the winter was rather too far advanced and the weather a little foggy. However, it did not want its beauties; the savage rudeness of the view is inconceivable without seeing it. I reckoned in one day thirteen cascades, the least of which was I daresay one hundred feet in height. I had Livy in the chaise with me.

Mont Cenis, I confess, carries the permission mountains have of being frightful rather too far, and its honours were accompanied with too much danger to give one time to reflect upon their beauties.

Thomas Gray.

#### MRS. PIOZZI

[This is a good specimen of Alpine travel in the eighteenth century. Mrs. Piozzi was, by her first marriage, Mrs. Thrale, the famous friend of Dr. Johnson.]

*October 17th, 1784.*

Mrs. Piozzi in  
the Alps

WE have at length passed the Alps, and are safely arrived at this lovely little city, whence I look back on the majestic boundaries of Italy, with amazement at his courage who first profaned them. Surely the immediate sensation conveyed to the mind by the sight of such tremendous appearances must be in every traveller the same, a sensation of fulness never experienced before, a satisfaction that there is something great to be seen on earth—some object capable of contenting even fancy.

I had the satisfaction of seeing a chamois at a distance, and spoke with a fellow who had killed five hungry bears that made depredation on his pastures: we looked on him with reverence as a monster-tamer of antiquity, Hercules or Cadmus: he had the skin of a beast wrapped round his middle, which confirmed the fancy;



but our servants, who borrowed from no fictitious records the few ideas that adorned their talk, told us he reminded them of John the Baptist. I had scarce recovered the shock of this too sublime comparison, when we approached his cottage, and found the felons nailed against the wall, like foxes' heads or spread kites in England. Here are many goats, but neither white nor large like those which browse upon the steeps of Snowdon, or clamber among the cliffs of Plinlimmon.

I chatted with a peasant in the Haute Morienne concerning the endemial swelling of the throat which is found in seven out of every ten persons here : he told me what I had always heard, but do not yet believe, that it was produced by drinking the snow-water. Certain it is that these places are not wholesome to live in ; most of the inhabitants are troubled with weak and sore eyes, and I recollect Sir Richard Jebb telling me, more than seven years ago, that when he passed through Savoy, the various applications made to him, either for the cure or prevention of blindness by numberless unfortunate wretches that crowded round him, hastened his quitting a province where such horrible complaints prevailed. One has heard it related that the goitre or gozzo of the throat is reckoned a beauty by those who possess it ; but I spoke with many, and all agreed to lament it as a misfortune. That it does really proceed merely from living in a snowy country would be well confirmed by accounts of a similar sickness being endemial in Canada ; but of an American goitre I have never yet heard—and Wales, methinks, is snowy enough and mountainous enough, God knows ; yet were such an excrescence to be seen there, the people would never have done wondering and blessing themselves.

As for Mount Cenis, I never felt myself more hungry or better enjoyed a good dinner than I did upon its top : but the trout in the lake there have been over-praised ; their pale colour allured me but little in the first place, nor is their flavour equal to that of trout found in running water. Going down the Italian side of the Alps is, after all, an astonishing journey, and affords the most magnificent scenery in nature which, varying at every step, gives new impressions to the mind each moment of one's passage : while the portion of terror excited either by real or fancied dangers on the



way, is just sufficient to mingle with the pleasure and make one feel the full effect of sublimity. To the chairmen who carry one, though nothing can be new, it is observable that the glories of these objects have never faded. I heard them speak to each other of their beauties, and the change of light since they had passed by last time, while a fellow who spoke English as well as a native told us that, having lived in a gentleman's service twenty years between London and Dublin, he at length begged his discharge, choosing to retire and finish his days a peasant upon these mountains, where he first opened his eyes upon scenes that made all other views of nature insipid to his taste.

If impressions of beauty remain, however, those of danger die away by frequent reiteration; the men who carried me seemed amazed that I should feel any emotions of fear. 'Qu'est-ce donc, madame?' was the coldly asked question to my repeated injunction 'Prenez garde'—not very apparently unnecessary either, where the least slip must have been fatal both to them and me.

Mrs. Piozzi.

*Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a  
Journey through France, Italy and Germany.*

London. A. Strahan, 1789.

## WORDSWORTH

Thought of a  
Briton on the  
Subjugation  
of Switzer-  
land

Two voices are there ; one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains ; each a mighty voice :  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,  
They were thy chosen music, Liberty !  
There came a tyrant, and with holy glee  
Thou fought'st against him ; but hast vainly striven :  
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,  
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.  
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft ;  
Then cleave, oh, cleave to that which still is left ;  
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be  
That mountain floods should thunder as before,  
And ocean bellow from his rocky shore,  
And neither awful voice be heard by thee !

Wordsworth (1802).

It was a *moral* end for which they fought ;  
 Else how, when mighty thrones were put to shame,  
 Could they, poor shepherds, have preserved an aim,  
 A resolution, or enlivening thought ?  
 Nor hath that moral good been *vainly* sought :  
 For in their magnanimity and fame  
 Powers have they left, an impulse, and a claim  
 Which neither can be overturned nor bought.  
 Sleep, warriors, sleep ! among your hills repose !  
 We know that ye, beneath the stern control  
 Of awful prudence, keep the unvanquished soul.  
 And, when, impatient of her guilt and woes,  
 Europe breaks forth ; then, shepherds ! shall ye rise  
 For perfect triumph o'er your enemies.

Wordsworth.

OF mortal parents is the hero born  
 By whom the undaunted Tyrolese are led ?  
 Or is it Tell's great spirit, from the dead  
 Returned to animate an age forlorn ?  
 He comes like Phoebus through the gates of morn  
 When dreary darkness is discomfited :  
 Yet mark his modest state ! upon his head,  
 That simple crest, a heron's plume, is worn.  
 O liberty ! they stagger at the shock ;  
 The murderers are aghast ; they strive to flee,  
 And half their host is buried—rock on rock  
 Descends :—beneath this godlike warrior, see !  
 Hills, torrents, woods, embodied to bemock  
 The tyrant, and confound his cruelty.

Hoffer

Advance—come forth from thy Tyrolean ground,  
 Dear liberty ! stern nymph of soul untamed,  
 Sweet nymph, oh, rightly of the mountains named !  
 Through the long chain of Alps from mound to mound  
 And o'er the eternal snows, like echo, bound,—  
 Like echo, when the hunter train at dawn  
 Have roused her from her sleep : and forest lawn,

Cliffs, woods, and caves her viewless steps resound  
 And babble of her pastime!—On, dread power!  
 With such invisible motion speed thy flight,  
 Through hanging clouds, from craggy height to height,  
 Through the green vales and through the herdsman's bower,  
 That all the Alps may gladden in thy might,  
 Here, there, and in all places at one hour.

Wordsworth.

## NAPOLEON

[Napoleon's passage was one of the most masterly of his early achievements. The Austrian General, Mélas, considered it so improbable that he stationed his army at Turin, and the result was that Napoleon was able to follow up his passage of the St. Bernard by cutting his communications before crushing the Austrians at Marengo. Thiers gives the best account.]

Napoleon's  
 Crossing of  
 the St.  
 Bernard

THE divisions marched *en échelon* from the Jura to the foot of the St. Bernard to avoid confusion. The First Consul was at Martigny in a convent of Bernardins. There he issued all orders, and was in constant correspondence with Paris and with the other armies of the Republic. He received intelligence from Liguria that M. de Mélas, still under a complete misconception of the reality, was most zealously exerting himself to take Genoa, and to force the bridge of the Var. Satisfied on this important point, he at length gave orders for the passage. As for himself, he remained on the North side of the St. Bernard that he might correspond as long as possible with the Government, and despatch everything himself across the mountains. Berthier, on the contrary, was to proceed to the other side of the St. Bernard, to receive the divisions and the *matériel*, which the First Consul was to send him.

Lannes passed first, at the head of the advanced guard, in the night between the 14th and 15th of May (24th and 25th Floréal). He commanded six regiments of picked troops, perfectly armed, and these, under this fiery leader, sometimes insubordinate but always so able and so valiant, gaily commenced this adventurous march. They set out between twelve o'clock and two in the morning, to gain the start of the moment when the heat of the sun, melting in the

snow brings down mountains of ice upon the head of the rash travellers who venture into those frightful gorges. It took eight hours to reach the summit of the Col on which the Hospice on St. Bernard is situated, and two hours only to descend to St. Remy : consequently there was time to pass before the moment of the greatest danger. The soldiers surmounted with ardour the difficulties of this route. They were heavily laden, for they had been obliged to carry biscuit for several days, and along with the biscuit a great quantity of ball cartridges. They climbed those steep tracks, singing amidst the precipices, dreaming of the conquest of that Italy where they had so often tasted the delights of victory, and having a noble presentiment of the immortal glory which they were about to acquire. The labour was not so great for the infantry as for the cavalry. These walked themselves, leading their horses by the bridle. There was no danger in ascending, but in the descent, the path, being very narrow, obliging them to walk before the horse, they were liable, if the animal made a false step, to be dragged by him into the abyss. Some accidents of this kind, not many, did actually happen, and some horses perished, but scarcely any of the men. Towards morning they reached the Hospice, and there a surprise provided by the First Consul renewed the strength and the good humour of those brave troops. The monks, having supplied themselves with the requisite provisions, had prepared tables, and served out a ration of bread, cheese and wine to every soldier. After resting for a moment, they resumed their march, and descended to St. Remy without any unpleasant accident. Lannes immediately established himself on the back of the mountain, and made all the necessary dispositions for receiving the other divisions, and particularly the *matériel*.

One of the divisions of the army was to pass every day. The operation would, therefore, last several days, especially on account of the *matériel* which it was requisite to forward with the divisions. While the troops were successively coming up, others fell to work. The provisions and the ammunition were moved off first. For this part of the *matériel*, which might be divided and placed on the backs of mules in small chests, the difficulty was not so great as for the rest. It consisted only in the insufficiency of the means of

transport; for, notwithstanding the lavish expense of money, there were not so many mules as were required for the enormous weight that was to be carried to the other side of the St. Bernard. However, the provisions and ammunition having crossed along with the divisions of the army and with the assistance of the soldiers, the artillery at length demanded attention. The gun-carriages and the ammunition wagons had been taken to pieces, as we have said, and placed on mules. The cannon themselves were still left, and their weight could not be reduced by the division of the load. With the twelve-pounders in particular, and with the howitzers, the difficulty was greater than had been at first expected. The sledges on wheels, constructed in the arsenals, could not be used. A method was contrived, tried immediately, and found to answer: this was, to split the trunks of fir trees in two, to hollow them out, to encase each piece of artillery within two of these half trunks, and to drag it thus covered along the ravines. Owing to these precautions no collision could damage it. Mules were harnessed to this singular load, and served to draw several pieces to the summit of the Col. But the descent was more difficult: that could only be effected by strength of arms and by incurring infinite dangers, because it was necessary to keep hold of the piece, and, while holding, to prevent it from slipping down the precipices. Unfortunately the mules began to be knocked up. The muleteers also, a great number of whom were required, were exhausted. It was then proposed to have recourse to other means. The peasants of the environs were offered so much as a thousand francs for every piece of cannon which they should agree to drag from St. Pierre to St. Remy. It took a hundred men to drag each, one day to get it up and another to get it down. Some hundreds of peasants came forward, and actually took several pieces of cannon across, under the direction of artillerymen. But even the allurements of gain was not strong enough to induce them to repeat the effort. All of them disappeared, and though officers were sent in quest of them, and made large offers to bring them back, these were of no avail, so that it was found necessary to ask the soldiers of the divisions to drag their artillery themselves. From such devoted soldiers anything might be obtained. To encourage them, they were promised the

money which the disheartened peasants would not earn ; but they refused it, saying that it was a point of honour for a body of troops to save their cannon, and they laid hold of the forsaken pieces. Parties of one hundred men, successively quitting the ranks, dragged them, each in its turn. The band played enlivening airs at difficult points of the passage and encouraged them to surmount obstacles of so novel a nature. On reaching the summit of the mountain they found refreshments prepared by the monks of St. Bernard ; and they took some rest before they made greater and more perilous efforts in the descent. In this manner, Chambarlhac's and Monnier's divisions dragged their artillery themselves ; and, as the advanced hour did not permit them to descend the same day, they chose rather to bivouac on the snow than to leave their cannon. Luckily the weather was serene ; so that they had not its inclemency to endure, in addition to the difficulties of the ground.

Napoleon himself set out to cross the Col before daylight on the 20th. He was accompanied by Duroc his aide-de-camp, and De Bourrienne his secretary. Artists have delineated him crossing the Alpine heights mounted on a fiery steed. The plain truth is, that he ascended the St. Bernard in that grey surtout which he usually wore, upon a mule, led by a guide belonging to the country, evincing, even in the difficult passes, the abstraction of a mind occupied elsewhere, conversing with the officers scattered on the road, and then, at intervals, questioning the guide who attended him, making him relate the particulars of his life, his pleasures, his pains, like an idle traveller who has nothing better to do. This guide, who was quite young, gave him a simple recital of the details of his obscure existence, and especially the vexation he felt because, for want of a little money, he could not marry one of the girls of his valley. The First Consul, sometimes listening, sometimes questioning the passengers with whom the mountain was covered, arrived at the Hospice, where the worthy monks gave him a warm reception. No sooner had he alighted from his mule than he wrote a note which he handed to his guide, desiring him to be sure and deliver it to the quarter-master of the army, who had been left on the other side of the St. Bernard. In the evening, the young man, on return-

ing to St. Pierre learned with surprise what powerful traveller it was whom he had guided in the morning ; and that General Bonaparte had ordered that a house and piece of ground should be given to him immediately, and that he should be supplied, in short, with the means requisite for marrying and for realising all the dreams of his modest ambition. This mountaineer died not long since, in his own country, an owner of land given to him by the ruler of the world. This singular act of beneficence, at a moment when his mind was engaged by such mighty interests, is worthy of attention. If there were nothing in it but a mere conqueror's caprice, dispensing at random good or evil, alternately overthrowing empires or rearing a cottage, it may be useful to record such caprices, if only to tempt the masters of the earth to imitation ; but such an act reveals something more. The human soul in those moments when it is filled with ardent desires is disposed to kindness ; it does good by way of meriting that which it is soliciting of Providence.

The First Consul halted for a short time with the monks, thanked them for their attentions to his army, and made them a magnificent present for the relief of the poor and of travellers.

He descended rapidly, suffering himself, according to the custom of the country, to glide down upon the snow, and arrived the same evening at Etroubles. Next day, after having paid some attention to the park of artillery, and to the provisions, he set out for Aosta and Bard.

Thiers.

*History of the Consulate and Empire.*

## VII

### THE ALPS IN FICTION

[This is the first literary reference to 'Alpine shop.']

AND so, ere answer knows what question would,  
Saving in dialogue of compliment ;  
And talking of the Alps and Apennines,  
The Pyrenean and the river Po,  
It draws towards supper in conclusion so.  
But this is worshipful society,  
And fits the mounting spirit like myself.

Shakespeare

*King John.* Act I. Scene I.

[Milton here places the Alps in hell, but there were mountains in Paradise too (Book XI. line 377).]

THROUGH many a dark and dreary vale  
They passed, and many a region dolorous,  
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,  
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death—  
A universe of death, which God by curse  
Created evil, for evil only good ;  
Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,  
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,  
Abominable, inutterable, and worse  
Than fables yet have feigned or fear conceived,  
Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimæras dire.

Milton

*Paradise Lost,* Book II.

#### SIR WALTER SCOTT

[This famous description of the Lake of Lucerne and Pilatus was written by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) in 1829 as a chapter in one of the last of the Waverley Novels, *Anne of Geierstein*.



Reading it now, we realise how recent is that peculiar and affectionate intimacy with the Alps which marks later literature. Something must be set down to the deliberate effort of the novelist to revive the impressions and feelings of an earlier day. But with all that we cannot fail to perceive that Scott looked upon the Alps with feelings quite different from ours. The change must be largely accredited to the successive groups of Alpine climbers and explorers who have gradually accustomed us to the glaciers and precipices of the Alps.]

Sir Walter  
Scott

FOR several hours after leaving Lucerne, the journey of our travellers was successfully prosecuted. The road, though precipitous and difficult, was rendered interesting by those splendid phenomena, which no country exhibits in a more astonishing manner than the mountains of Switzerland, where the rocky pass, the verdant valley, the broad lake, and the rushing torrent, the attributes of other hills as well as these, are interspersed with the magnificent and yet fearful horrors of the glaciers, a feature peculiar to themselves.

It was not an age in which the beauties or grandeur of a landscape made much impression either on the minds of those who travelled through the country or who resided in it. To the latter, the objects, however dignified, were familiar, and associated with daily habits and with daily toil; and the former saw, perhaps, more terror than beauty in the wild region through which they passed, and were rather solicitous to get safe to their night's quarters, than to comment on the grandeur of the scenes which lay between them and their place of rest. Yet our merchants, as they proceeded on their journey, could not help being strongly impressed by the character of the scenery around them. Their road lay along the side of the lake, at times level and close on its very margin, at times rising to a great height on the side of the mountain, and winding along the verge of precipices which sunk down to the water as sharp and sheer as the wall of a castle descending upon the ditch which defends it. At other times it traversed spots of a milder character,—delightful green slopes, and lowly, retired valleys, affording both pasturage and arable ground, sometimes watered by small streams, which winded by the hamlet of wooden huts with their fantastic

little church and steeple, meandered round the orchard, and the mount of vines, and, murmuring gently as they flowed, found a quiet passage into the lake.

'That stream, Arthur,' said the elder traveller, as with one consent they stopped to gaze on such a scene as I have described, 'resembles the life of a good and a happy man.'

'And the brook, which hurries itself headlong down yon distant hill, marking its course by a streak of white foam,' answered Arthur, — 'what does that resemble ?

'That of a brave and unfortunate one,' replied his father.

'The torrent for me,' said Arthur ; 'a headlong course which no human force can oppose, and then let it be as brief as it is glorious.'

'It is a young man's thought,' replied his father ; 'but I am well aware that it is so rooted in thy heart, that nothing but the rude hand of adversity can pluck it up.'

'As yet the root clings fast to my heart's strings,' said the young man ; 'and methinks adversity's hand hath had a fair grasp of it.'

'You speak, my son, of what you little understand,' said his father. 'Know that till the middle of life be passed, men scarce distinguish true prosperity from adversity, or rather they court as the favours of fortune what they should more justly regard as the marks of her displeasure. Look at yonder mountain, which wears on its shaggy brow a diadem of clouds, now raised and now depressed, while the sun glances upon, but is unable to dispel it ;— a child might believe it to be a crown of glory—a man knows it to be the signal of tempest.'

Arthur followed the direction of his father's eye to the dark and shadowy eminence of Mount Pilatus.<sup>1</sup>

'Is the mist on yonder wild mountain so ominous, then ?' asked the young man.

'Demand of Antonio,' said his father ; 'he will tell you the legend.'

The young merchant addressed himself to the Swiss lad who acted as their attendant, desiring to know the name of the gloomy

<sup>1</sup> An isolated peak, 7000 feet high, at the western end of the Lake of Lucerne. (Scott's note.)

height, which, in that quarter, seems the leviathan of the huge congregation of mountains assembled about Lucerne.

The lad crossed himself devoutly, as he recounted the popular legend, that the wicked Pontius Pilate, Proconsul of Judea, had here found the termination of his impious life; having, after spending years in the recesses of that mountain which bears his name, at length, in remorse and despair rather than in penitence, plunged into the dismal lake which occupies the summit. Whether water refused to do the executioner's duty upon such a wretch, or whether, his body being drowned, his vexed spirit continued to haunt the place where he committed suicide, Antonio did not pretend to explain. But a form was often, he said, seen to emerge from the gloomy waters, and go through the action of one washing his hands; and when he did so, dark clouds of mist gathered first round the bosom of the Infernal Lake (such it has been styled of old), and then wrapping the whole upper part of the mountain in darkness, presaged a tempest or hurricane, which was sure to follow in a short space. He added, that the evil spirit was peculiarly exasperated at the audacity of such strangers as ascended the mountain to gaze at his place of punishment, and that, in consequence, the magistrates of Lucerne had prohibited any one from approaching Mount Pilatus, under severe penalties. Antonio once more crossed himself as he finished his legend; in which act of devotion he was imitated by his hearers, too good Catholics to entertain any doubt of the truth of the story.

'How the accursed heathen scowls upon us!' said the younger of the merchants, while the cloud darkened and seemed to settle on the brow of Mount Pilatus. '*Vade retro*;—be thou defied, sinner!'

A rising wind, rather heard than felt, seemed to groan forth, in the tone of a dying lion, the acceptance of the suffering spirit to the rash challenge of the young Englishman. The mountain was seen to send down its rugged sides thick wreaths of heaving mist, which, rolling through the rugged chasms that seamed the grisly hill, resembled torrents of rushing lava pouring down from a volcano. The ridgy precipices, which formed the sides of these huge ravines, showed their splintery and rugged edges over the vapour, as if dividing from each other the descending streams of mist which

rolled around them. As a strong contrast to this gloomy and threatening scene, the more distant mountain range of Rigi shone brilliant with all the hues of an autumnal sun.

While the travellers watched this striking and varied contrast, which resembled an approaching combat betwixt the powers of Light and Darkness, their guide, in his mixed jargon of Italian and German, exhorted them to make haste on their journey. The village to which he proposed to conduct them, he said, was yet distant, the road bad and difficult to find, and if the Evil One' (looking to Mount Pilatus, and crossing himself) 'should send his darkness upon the valley, the path would be both doubtful and dangerous. The travellers, thus admonished, gathered the capes of their cloaks close round their throats, pulled their bonnets resolutely over their brows, drew the buckle of the broad belts which fastened their mantles, and each with a mountain staff in his hand, well shod with an iron spike, they pursued their journey with unabated strength and undaunted spirit.

With every step the scenes around them appeared to change. Each mountain, as if its firm and immutable form were flexible and varying, altered in appearance like that of a shadowy apparition, as the position of the strangers relative to them changed with their motions, and as the mist, which continued slowly though constantly to descend, influenced the rugged aspect of the hills and valleys which it shrouded with its vapoury mantle. The nature of their progress, too, never direct, but winding by a narrow path along the sinuosities of the valley, and making many a circuit round precipices and other obstacles which it was impossible to surmount, added to the wild variety of a journey, in which, at last, the travellers totally lost any vague idea which they had previously entertained concerning the direction in which the road led them.

'I would,' said the elder, 'we had that mystical needle which mariners talk of that points ever to the north, and enables them to keep their way on the waters, when there is neither cape nor headland, sun, moon, nor stars, nor any mark in heaven or earth, to tell them how to steer.'

'It would scarce avail us among these mountains,' answered the youth; 'for though that wonderful needle may keep its point to

the northern pole-star when it is on a flat surface like the sea, it is not to be thought it would do so when these huge mountains arise like walls betwixt the steel and the object of its sympathy.'

'I fear me,' replied the father, 'we shall find our guide, who has been growing hourly more stupid since he left his own valley, as useless as you suppose the compass would be among the hills of this wild country.—Canst tell, my boy,' addressing Antonio in bad Italian, 'if we be in the road we purposed?'

'If it please Saint Antonio,' said the guide, who was obviously too much confused to answer the question directly.

'And that water, half covered with mist, which glimmers through the fog at the foot of this huge black precipice—is it still a part of the Lake of Lucerne, or have we lighted upon another since we ascended that last hill?'

Antonio could only answer that they ought to be on the Lake of Lucerne still, and that he hoped that what they saw below them was only a winding branch of the same sheet of water. But he could say nothing with certainty.

'Dog of an Italian!' exclaimed the younger traveller, 'thou deservest to have thy bones broken, for undertaking a charge which thou art as incapable to perform as thou art to guide us to heaven!'

'Peace, Arthur,' said his father; 'if you frighten the lad, he runs off, and we lose the small advantage we might have by his knowledge; if you use your baton, he rewards you with the stab of a knife,—for such is the humour of a revengeful Lombard. Either way, you are marred instead of helped.—Hark thee hither, my boy,' he continued, in his indifferent Italian; 'be not afraid of that hot youngster, whom I will not permit to injure thee; but tell me, if thou canst, the names of the villages by which we are to make our journey to-day.'

The gentle mode in which the elder traveller spoke reassured the lad, who had been somewhat alarmed at the harsh tone and menacing expressions of his younger companion; and he poured forth, in his patois, a flood of names, in which the German guttural sounds were strangely intermixed with the soft accents of the Italian, but which carried to the hearer no intelligible information

concerning the object of his question ; so that at length he was forced to conclude, 'Even lead on, in Our Lady's Name, or in Saint Antonio's if you like it better ; we shall but lose time, I see, in trying to understand each other.'

They moved on as before, with this difference, that the guide, leading the mule, now went first, and was followed by the other two, whose motions he had formerly directed by calling to them from behind. The clouds meantime became thicker and thicker, and the mist, which had at first been a thin vapour, began now to descend in the form of a small thick rain, which gathered like dew upon the capotes of the travellers. Distant rustling and groaning sounds were heard among the remote mountains, similar to those by which the Evil Spirit of Mount Pilatus had seemed to announce the storm. The boy again pressed his companions to advance, but at the same time threw impediments in the way of their doing so, by the slowness and indecision which he showed in leading them on.

Having proceeded in this manner for three or four miles, which uncertainty rendered doubly tedious, the travellers were at length engaged in a narrow path, running along the verge of a precipice. Beneath was water, but of what description they could not ascertain. The wind, indeed, which began to be felt in sudden gusts, sometimes swept aside the mist so completely as to show the waves glimmering below ; but whether they were those of the same lake on which their morning journey had commenced, whether it was another and separate sheet of water of a similar character, or whether it was a river or large brook, the view afforded was too indistinct to determine. Thus far was certain, that they were not on the shores of the Lake of Lucerne where it displays its usual expanse of waters ; for the same hurricane gusts which showed them water in the bottom of the glen, gave them a transient view of the opposite side, at what exact distance they could not well discern, but near enough to show tall abrupt rocks and shaggy pine-trees, here united in groups, and there singly anchored among the cliffs which overhung the water. This was a more distinct landscape than the farther side of the lake would have offered, had they been on the right road.

Hitherto the path, though steep and rugged, was plainly enough

indicated, and showed traces of having been used both by riders and foot passengers. But suddenly, as Antonio with the loaded mule had reached a projecting eminence, around the peak of which the path made a sharp turn, he stopped short, with his usual exclamation, addressed to his patron saint. It appeared to Arthur that the mule shared the terrors of the guide; for it started back, put forward its fore-feet separate from each other, and seemed, by the attitude which it assumed, to intimate a determination to resist every proposal to advance, at the same time expressing horror and fear at the prospect which lay before it.

Arthur pressed forward, not only from curiosity, but that he might if possible bear the brunt of any danger before his father came up to share it. In less time than we have taken to tell the story, the young man stood beside Antonio and the mule, upon a platform of rock on which the road seemed absolutely to terminate, and from the farther side of which a precipice sunk sheer down, to what depth the mist did not permit him to discern, but certainly uninterrupted for more than three hundred feet.

The blank expression which overcast the visage of the younger traveller, and traces of which might be discerned in the physiognomy of the beast of burden, announced alarm and mortification at this unexpected, and, as it seemed, insurmountable obstacle. Nor did the looks of the father, who presently after came up to the same spot, convey either hope or comfort. He stood with the others gazing on the misty gulf beneath them, and looking all around, but in vain, for some continuation of the path, which certainly had never been originally designed to terminate in this summary manner. As they stood uncertain what to do next, the son in vain attempting to discover some mode of passing onward, and the father about to propose that they should return by the road which had brought them hither, a loud howl of the wind, more wild than they had yet heard, swept down the valley. All being aware of the danger of being hurled from the precarious station which they occupied, snatched at bushes and rocks by which to secure themselves, and even the poor mule seemed to steady itself in order to withstand the approaching hurricane. The gust came with such unexpected fury that it appeared to the



travellers to shake the very rock on which they stood, and would have swept them from its surface like so many dry leaves, had it not been for the momentary precautions which they had taken for their safety. But as the wind rushed down the glen, it completely removed for the space of three or four minutes the veil of mist which former gusts had only served to agitate or discompose, and showed them the nature and cause of the interruption which they had met with so unexpectedly.

The rapid but correct eye of Arthur was then able to ascertain that the path, after leaving the platform of rock on which they stood, had originally passed upwards in the same direction along the edge of a steep bank of earth, which had then formed the upper covering of a stratum of precipitous rocks. But it had chanced in some of the convulsions of nature which take place in those wild regions, where she works upon a scale so formidable, that the earth had made a slip, or almost a precipitous descent, from the rock, and been hurled downwards, with the path, which was traced along the top, and with bushes, trees, or whatever grew upon it, into the channel of the stream; for such they could now discern the water beneath them to be, and not a lake or an arm of a lake, as they had hitherto supposed.

The immediate cause of this phenomenon might probably have been an earthquake, not unfrequent in that country. The bank of earth, now a confused mass of ruins inverted in its fall, showed some trees growing in a horizontal position, and others, which, having pitched on their heads in their descent, were at once inverted and shattered to pieces, and lay a sport to the streams of the river which they had heretofore covered with gloomy shadow. The gaunt precipice which remained behind, like the skeleton of some huge monster divested of its flesh, formed the wall of a fearful abyss, resembling the face of a newly-wrought quarry, more dismal of aspect from the rawness of its recent formation, and from its being as yet uncovered with any of the vegetation with which nature speedily mantles over the bare surface even of her sternest crags and precipices.

Besides remarking these appearances, which tended to show that this interruption of the road had been of recent occurrence,



Arthur was able to observe, on the farther side of the river, higher up the valley, and rising out of the pine forest, interspersed with rocks, a square building of considerable height, like the ruins of a Gothic tower. He pointed out this remarkable object to Antonio, and demanded if he knew it; justly conjecturing that, from the peculiarity of the site, it was a landmark not easily to be forgotten by any who had seen it before. Accordingly, it was gladly and promptly recognised by the lad, who called cheerfully out, that the place was Geierstein, that is, as he explained it, the Rock of the Vultures. He knew it, he said, by the old tower, as well as by a huge pinnacle of rock which arose near it, almost in the form of a steeple, to the top of which the lammer-geier (one of the largest birds of prey known to exist) had in former days transported the child of an ancient lord of the castle. He proceeded to recount the vow which was made by the Knight of Geierstein to our Lady of Einsiedeln;<sup>1</sup> and, while he spoke, the castle, rocks, woods, and precipices again faded in mist. But as he concluded his wonderful narrative with the miracle which restored the infant again to its father's arms, he cried out suddenly, 'Look to yourselves—the storm!—the storm!' It came accordingly, and, sweeping the mist before it, again bestowed on the travellers a view of the horrors around them.

'Ay!' quoth Antonio triumphantly, as the gust abated, 'old Pontius loves little to hear of Our Lady of Einsiedeln; but she will keep her own with him—Ave Maria!'

'That tower,' said the young traveller, 'seems uninhabited. I can descry no smoke, and the battlement appears ruinous.'

'It has not been inhabited for many a day,' answered the guide. 'But I would I were at it, for all that. Honest Arnold Biederman, the Landamman' (chief magistrate) 'of the Canton of Unterwalden, dwells near, and, I warrant you, distressed strangers will not want the best that cupboard and cellar can find them, wherever he holds rule.'

'I have heard of him,' said the elder traveller, whom Antonio had been taught to call Signor Philipson; 'a good and

<sup>1</sup> Einsiedeln, a celebrated Benedictine abbey, a few miles south of the Lake of Zurich. (Scott's note.)

hospitable man, and one who enjoys deserved weight with his countrymen.'

'You have spoken him right, signor,' answered the guide; 'and I would we could reach his house, where you should be sure of hospitable treatment, and a good direction for your next day's journey. But how are we to get to the Vulture's Castle, unless we had wings like the vulture, is a question hard to answer.'

Arthur replied by a daring proposal, which the reader will find in the next chapter.

[For his proposal and the subsequent adventures I must now refer my readers back to the novel itself.—H. S.]

Sir Walter Scott.  
*Anne of Geierstein.*

## BYRON

[I reproduce here the Alpine descriptions from the short dramatic poem of *Manfred* written after Byron's visit to the Alps.]

## ACT I. Scene 1.

*Voice of the Second Spirit*

MONT BLANC is the monarch of mountains:

They crown'd him long ago  
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,  
With a diadem of snow.

Around his waist are forests braced,

The Avalanche in his hand;  
But ere it fall, that thundering ball  
Must pause for my command.

The Glacier's cold and restless mass

Moves onward day by day;

But I am he who bids it pass,

Or with its ice delay.

I am the spirit of the place,

Could make the mountain bow

And quiver to his cavern'd base—

And what with me wouldst *Thou*?

'Manfred' in  
the Alps

Scene 2. *The Mountain of the Jungfrau*

My mother Earth,

And thou, fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,  
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.  
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,  
That openest over all, and unto all  
Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.  
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge  
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath  
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs  
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,  
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring  
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed  
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?  
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;  
I see the peril—yet do not recede;  
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:  
There is a power upon me which withholds,  
And makes it my fatality to live;  
If it be life to wear within myself  
This barrenness of spirit, and to be  
My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased  
To justify my deeds unto myself—  
The last infirmity of evil. Ay,  
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,

[*An eagle passes.*]

Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,  
Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be  
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets: thou art gone  
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine  
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,  
With a pervading vision—Beautiful!  
How beautiful is all this visible world!  
How glorious in its action and itself!  
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we  
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit  
To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make

A conflict of its elements, and breathe  
The breath of degradation and of pride,  
Contending with low wants and lofty will,  
Till our mortality predominates,  
And men are—what they name not to themselves,  
And trust not to each other. . . .

## ACT II. Scene 2.

*A lower valley in the Alps—A cataract*

It is not noon—the sunbow's rays still arch  
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,  
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column  
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,  
And fling its lines of foaming light along,  
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,  
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,  
As told in the Apocalypse. No eyes  
But mine now drink this sight of loveliness ;  
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,  
And with the Spirit of the place divide  
The homage of these waters—I will call her.  
[*Manfred takes some of the water into the palm of his  
hand, and flings it into the air, muttering the  
adjuration. After a pause, the Witch of the Alps  
rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.*]

Beautiful Spirit ! with thy hair of light,  
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form  
The charms of earth's least mortal daughters grow  
To an unearthly stature, in an essence  
Of purer elements ; while the hues of youth—  
Carnation'd like a sleeping infant's cheek,  
Rock'd by the beating of her mother's heart,  
Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves  
Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,  
The blush of earth, embracing with her heaven—  
Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame  
The beauties of the sunbow which bends o'er thee.

Beautiful Spirit ! in thy calm clear brow,  
 Wherein is glass'd serenity of soul,  
 Which of itself shows immortality,  
 I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son  
 Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit  
 At times to commune with them—if that he  
 Avail him of his spells—to call thee thus,  
 And gaze on thee a moment.

ACT III. Scene 4

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops  
 Of the snow-shining mountains—Beautiful !  
 I linger yet with Nature, for the night  
 Hath been to me a more familiar face  
 Than that of man ; and in her starry shade  
 Of dim and solitary loveliness,  
 I learn'd the language of another world.  
 I do remember me, that in my youth,  
 When I was wandering,—upon such a night  
 I stood within the Coliseum's wall,  
 'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome ;  
 The trees which grew along the broken arches  
 Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars  
 Shone through the rents of ruin ; from afar  
 The watch-dog bay'd beyond the Tiber ; and  
 More near from out the Cæsar's palace came  
 The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,  
 Of distant sentinels the fitful song  
 Begun and died upon the gentle wind.  
 Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach  
 Appear'd to skirt the horizon, yet they stood  
 Within a bowshot.—Where the Cæsars dwelt,  
 And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst  
 A grove which springs through levell'd battlements,  
 And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,  
 Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth ;  
 But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,

A noble wreck in ruinous perfection !  
 While Cæsar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,  
 Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.—  
 And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon  
 All this, and cast a wide and tender light,  
 Which soften'd down the hoar austerity  
 Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,  
 As 'twere anew, the gaps of centuries ;  
 Leaving that beautiful which still was so,  
 And making that which was not, till the place  
 Became religion, and the heart ran o'er  
 With silent worship of the great of old !—  
 The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule  
 Our spirits from their urns.—

'Twas such a night !—

'Tis strange that I recall it at this time ;  
 But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight  
 Even at the moment when they should array  
 Themselves in pensive order.

Byron.  
*Manfred.*

GEORGE MEREDITH

CARRY your fevers to the Alps, you of minds diseased ; not to sit  
 down in sight of them ruminating, for bodily ease and comfort  
 will trick the soul and set you measuring our lean humanity  
 against yonder sublime and infinite ; but mount, rack the limbs,  
 wrestle it out among the peaks ; taste danger, sweat, earn rest :  
 learn to discover ungrudgingly that haggard fatigue is the fair  
 vision you have run to earth, and that rest is your uttermost  
 reward. Would you know what it is to hope again, and have all  
 your hopes at hand ?—hang upon the crags at a gradient that  
 makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the  
 thing you may become. There the merry little hopes grow for the  
 climber like flowers and food, immediate, prompt to prove their  
 uses, sufficient if just within the grasp, as mortal hopes should be.  
 How the old lax life closes in about you there ! You are the man

'Carry your  
 Fevers to the  
 Alps'

of your faculties, nothing more. Why should a man pretend to more? We ask it wonderingly when we are healthy. Poetic rhapsodists in the vales below may tell you of the joy and grandeur of the upper regions, they cannot pluck you the medical herb. He gets that for himself who wanders the marshy ledge at nightfall to behold the distant Sennhüttchen twinkle, who leaps the green-eyed crevasses, and in the solitude of an emerald alp stretches a salt hand to the mountain-kine.

George Meredith.  
*The Adventures of Harry Richmond.*  
 Constable and Co. Ltd.

'Morning at  
 Sea under the  
 Alps'

THE breeze blew steadily, enough to swell the sails and sweep the vessel on smoothly. The night air dropped no moisture on deck.

Nevil Beauchamp dozed for an hour. He was awakened by light on his eyelids, and starting up beheld the many pinnacles of grey and red rocks and shadowy high white regions at the head of the gulf waiting for the sun; and the sun struck them. One by one they came out in crimson flame, till the vivid host appeared to have stepped forward. The shadows on the snow-fields deepened to purple below an irradiation of rose and pink and dazzling silver. There of all the world you might imagine Gods to sit. A crowd of mountains endless in range, erect, or flowing, shattered or arid, or leaning in smooth lustre, hangs above the gulf. The mountains are sovereign Alps, and the sea is beneath them. The whole gigantic body keeps the sea, as with a hand, to right and left.

The Adriatic was dark, the Alps had heaven to themselves. Crescents and hollows, rosy mounds, white shelves, shining ledges, domes and peaks, all the towering heights were an illumination from Friuli into farthest Tyrol; beyond earth to the stricken senses of the gazers. Colour was steadfast on the massive front ranks; it wavered in the remoteness, and was quick and dim as though it fell on beating wings; but there too divine colour seized and shaped forth solid forms, and thence away to

others in uttermost distances where the incredible flickering gleam of new heights arose, that soared, or stretched their white uncertain curves in sky like wings traversing infinity.

George Meredith.  
*Beauchamp's Career.*  
Constable and Co. Ltd.

BEYOND the firwood light was visibly the dawn's! Half-way down the ravines it resembled the light cast off a torrent water. It lay on the grass like a sheet of unreflecting steel, and was a face without a smile above. Their childhood ran along the tracks to the forest by the light, which was neither dim nor cold, but grave; presenting tree and shrub and dwarf growth and grass austerely, not deepening or confusing them. They wound their way by borders of crag, seeing in a dell below the mouth of the idle mine begirt with weedy and shrub-hung rock, a dripping semi-circle. Farther up they came on the flat juniper and crossed a wet ground-thicket of whortleberry: their feet were in the moist moss among sprigs of heath; and a great fir tree stretched his length, a peeled multitude of his dead fellows leaned and stood upright in the midst of scattered fire-stained members, and through their skeleton limbs the sheer precipice of slate-rock of the bulk across the chasm, nursery of hawk and eagle, wore a thin blue tinge, the sign of warmer light abroad.

'A Mountain  
Walk in  
Mist and  
Sunshine'

'This way, my brother!' cried Carinthia, shuddering at a path he was about to follow.

Dawn in the mountain-land is a meeting of many friends. The pinnacle, the forest-head, the latschen-tufted mound, rock-bastion and defiant cliff and giant of the triple peak, were in view, clearly lined for a common recognition, but all were figures of solid gloom, unfeatured and bloomless. Another minute and they had flung off their mail and changed to various, indented, intricate, succinct in ridge, scar and channel; and they had all a look of watchfulness that made them one company. The smell of rock-waters and roots of herb and moss grew keen; air became a wine that raised the breast high to breathe it; an uplifting coolness pervaded the heights. What wonder that the mountain-bred girl should let fly her voice. The natural carol woke an echo. She did not repeat it.



‘And we will not forget our home, Chillon,’ she said, touching him gently to comfort some saddened feeling.

The plumes of cloud now slowly entered into the lofty arch of dawn and melted from brown to purple-black. The upper sky swam with violet; and in a moment each stray cloud-feather was edged with rose, and then suffused. It seemed that the heights fronted east to eye the interflooding of colours, and it was imaginable that all turned to the giant whose forehead first kindled to the sun: a greeting of god and king.

The armies of the young sunrise in mountain lands neighbouring the plains, vast shadows, were marching over woods and meads, black against the edge of golden; and great heights were cut with them, and bounding waters took the leap in a silvery radiance to gloom; the bright and dark-banded valleys were like night and morning taking hands down the sweep of their rivers. Immense was the range of vision scudding the peaks and over the illimitable Eastward plains flat to the very East and sources of the sun.

#### The Land of Waterfalls

THEY loved mountain air and scenery, and each step to the ridge of the pass they climbed was an advance in splendour. Peaks of ashen hue and pale dry red and pale sulphur pushed up, straight, forked, twisted, naked, striking their minds with an indeterminate ghostliness of Indian, so strange they were in shape and colouring. These sharp points were the first to greet them between the blue and green. A depression of the pass to the left gave sight of the points of black fir forest below, round the girths of the barren shafts. Mountain blocks appeared pushing up in front, and a mountain wall and woods on it, and mountains in the distance, and cliffs riven with falls of water that were silver skeins, down lower to meadows, villages and spires, and lower finally to the whole valley of the foaming river, field and river seeming in imagination rolled out from the hand of the heading mountain.

They were in a land of waterfalls and busy mills, a narrowing vale where the runs of grass grew short and wild, and the glacier-river roared for the leap, more foam than water, and the savagery,

naturally exciting to her, breathed of its lair among the rocks and ice-fields.

This done, she sat straight in the car. It was toiling up the steep ascent of a glen to the mountain village, the last of her native province. Her proposal to walk was accepted, and the speeding of her blood, now that she had mastered the new element in it, soon restored her to her sisterly affinity with natural glories. The sunset was on yonder side of the snows. Here there was a feast of variously-tinted sunset shadows on snow, meadows, rock, river, serrated cliff. The peaked cap of the rushing rock-dotted sweeps of upward snow caught a scarlet illumination: one flank of the white in heaven was violetted wonderfully.

George Meredith.  
*The Amazing Marriage.*  
Constable and Co. Ltd.

### MASON

[A very remarkable description of one of the greatest climbs in the Alps—the climb of Mont Blanc by the Brenva Ridge.]

‘KEEP the rope stretched tight, Wallie,’ said Garratt Skinner: and they descended into the furrows of that wild and frozen sea. The day’s work had begun in earnest; and almost at once they began to lose time.

**The Brenva  
Ridge**

Now it was a perilous strip of ice between unfathomable blue depths along which they must pass, as bridge-builders along their girders, yet without the bridge-builders’ knowledge that at the end of the passage there was a further way. Now it was some crevasse into which they must descend, cutting their steps down a steep rib of ice; now it was a wall up which the leader must be hoisted on the shoulders of his companions, and even so, as likely as not, his fingers could not reach the top, but hand holds and foot holds must be hewn with the axe till a ladder was formed. Now it was some crevasse gaping across their path; they must search this way and that for a firm snow bridge by which to overpass it. It was difficult, as Pierre Delouvain discovered, to find a path through that tangled labyrinth without some knowledge of the glacier. For, only at rare times, when he stood high on a sérac, could he see his

way from more than a few yards ahead. Pierre aimed straight for the foot of the buttress, working thus due north. And he was wrong. Garratt Skinner knew it, but said not a word. He stood upon insecure ledges and supported Delouvain upon his shoulders, and pushed him up with his ice-axe into positions which only involved the party in further difficulties. He took his life in his hands and risked it, knowing the better way. Yet all the while the light broadened, the great violet shadows crept down the slopes and huddled at the bases of the peaks. Then the peaks took fire, and suddenly along the dull white slopes in front of them the fingers of the morning flashed in gold. Over the Eastern rocks the sun had leaped into the sky. For a little while longer they advanced deeper into the entanglement, and when they were about half-way across they came to a stop. They were on a tongue of ice which narrowed to a point; the point abutted against a perpendicular ice-wall thirty feet high. Nowhere was there any break in that wall, and at each side of the tongue the ice gaped in chasms.

‘We must go back,’ said Pierre. ‘I have forgotten the way.’

He had never known it. Seduced by a treble fee, he had assumed an experience which he did not possess. Garratt Skinner looked at his watch, and turning about led the party back for a little while. Then he turned to his right and said:—

‘I think it must go in this direction,’ and lo! making steadily across some difficult ground, no longer in a straight line northwards to Mont Blanc, but westward towards the cliffs of the Peuteret ridge under Garratt Skinner’s lead, they saw a broad causeway of ice open before them. The causeway led them to steep slopes of snow, up which it was just possible to kick steps, and then working back again to the east they reached the foot of the great buttress on its western side just where it forms a right angle with the face of the mountain. Garratt Skinner once more looked at his watch. It had been half-past two when they had put on the rope, it was now close upon half-past six. They had taken four hours to traverse the ice-fall, and they should have taken only two and a half. Garratt Skinner, however, expressed no anxiety. On the contrary, one might have thought that he wished to lose time.

'There's one of the difficulties disposed of,' he said cheerily. 'You did very well, Wallie—very well. It was not altogether nice, was it? But you won't have to go back.'

Walter Hine had indeed crossed the glacier without complaint. There had been times when he had shivered, times when his heart within him had swelled with a longing to cry out 'let us go back!' But he had not dared. He had been steadied across the narrow bridge with the rope, hauled up the ice-walls and let down again on the other side. But he had come through. He took some pride in the exploit as he gazed back from the top of the snow-slope across the tumult of ice to the rocks on which he had slept. He had come through safely, and he was encouraged to go on.

'We won't stop here, I think,' said Garratt Skinner. They had already halted upon the glacier for a second breakfast. The sun was getting hot upon the slopes above, and small showers of snow and crusts of ice were beginning to shoot down the gullies of the buttress at the base of which they stood. 'We will have a third breakfast when we are out of range.' He called to Delouvain who was examining the face of the rock buttress up which they must ascend to its crest, and said, 'It looks as if we should do well to work out to the right, I think.'

The rocks were difficult, but their difficulty was not fully appreciated by Walter Hine. Nor did he understand the danger. There were gullies in which new snow lay in a thin crust over hard ice. He noticed that in those gullies the steps were cut deep into the ice below, that Garratt Skinner bade him not loiter, and that Pierre Delouvain in front made himself fast and drew in the rope with a particular care when it came to his turn to move. But he did not know that all that surface snow might peel off in a moment, and swish down the cliffs, sweeping the party from their feet. There were rounded rocks and slabs with no hold for hand or foot but roughnesses in the surface, and here and there a wrinkle. But the guide went first, as often as not pushed up by Garratt Skinner, and Walter Hine, like many another inefficient man before him, came up, like a bundle, on the rope afterwards. Thus they climbed for three hours more. Walter Hine, nursed by gradually lengthening

expeditions, was not as yet tired. Moreover the exhilaration of the air, and excitement, helped to keep fatigue aloof. They rested just below the crest of the ridge and took another meal.

'Eat often and little. That's the golden rule,' said Garratt Skinner. 'No brandy, Wallie. Keep that in your flask!'

Pierre Delouvain, however, followed a practice not unknown amongst Chamonix guides.

'Absinthe is good on the mountains,' said he.

When they rose, the order of going was changed. Pierre Delouvain, who had led all the morning, now went last, and Garratt Skinner led. He led quickly and with great judgment or knowledge—Pierre Delouvain at the end of the rope wondered whether it was judgment or knowledge—and suddenly Walter Hine found himself standing on the crest with Garratt Skinner, and looking down the other side upon a glacier far below, which flows from the Mur de la Côte on the summit ridge of Mont Blanc into the Brenva glacier.

'That's famous,' said Garratt Skinner, looking once more at his watch. He did not say that they had lost yet another hour upon the face of the buttress. It was now half-past nine in the morning. 'We are twelve thousand feet up, Wallie,' and he swung to his left, and led the party up the ridge of the buttress.

As they went along this ridge, Wallie Hine's courage rose. It was narrow but not steep, nor was it ice. It was either rock or snow in which steps could be kicked. He stepped out with a greater confidence. If this were all, the Brenva climb was a fraud, he exclaimed to himself in the vanity of his heart. Ahead of them a tall black tower stood up, hiding what lay beyond, and up towards this tower Garratt Skinner led quickly. He no longer spoke to his companions, he went forward, assured and inspiring assurance; he reached the tower, passed it and began to cut steps. His axe rang as it fell. It was ice into which he was cutting.

This was the first warning which Walter Hine received. But he paid no heed to it. He was intent upon setting his feet in the steps: he found the rope awkward to handle and keep tight; his attention was absorbed in observing his proper distance. Moreover, in front of him the stalwart figure of Garratt Skinner blocked

his vision. He went forward. The snow on which he walked became hard ice, and instead of sloping upwards ran ahead almost in a horizontal line. Suddenly, however, it narrowed; Hine became conscious of appalling depths on either side of him; it narrowed with extraordinary rapidity; half a dozen paces behind him he had been walking on a broad smooth path; now he walked on the width of the top of a garden wall. His knees began to shake; he halted; he reached out vainly into emptiness for some support on which his shaking hands might clutch. And then in front of him he saw Garratt Skinner sit down and bstride the wall. Over Garratt Skinner's head, he now saw the path by which he needs must go. He was on the famous ice-ridge; and nothing so formidable, so terrifying, had even entered into his dreams during his sleep upon the rocks where he had bivouacked. It thinned to a mere sharp edge, a line without breadth of cold blue ice, and it stretched away through the air for a great distance until it melted suddenly into the face of the mountain. On the left hand an almost vertical slope of ice dropped to depths which Hine did not dare to fathom with his eyes; on the right there was no slope at all; a wall of crumbling snow descended from the edge straight as a weighted line. On neither side could the point of the axe be driven in to preserve the balance. Walter Hine uttered a whimpering cry:—

'I shall fall! I shall fall!'

Garratt Skinner, astride of the ridge, looked over his shoulder.

'Sit down,' he cried sharply. But Walter Hine dared not. He stood, all his courage gone, tottering on the narrow top of the wall, afraid to stoop, lest his knees should fail him altogether and his feet slip from beneath him. To bend down until his hands could rest upon the ice, and meanwhile to keep his feet—no he could not do it. He stood trembling, his face distorted with fear, and his body swaying a little from side to side. Garratt Skinner called sharply to Pierre Delouvain.

'Quick, Pierre.'

There was no time for Garratt Skinner to return; but he gathered himself together on the ridge, ready for a spring. Had Walter Hine toppled over, and swung down the length of the rope, as at any moment he might have done, Garratt Skinner was prepared.

He would have jumped down the opposite side of the ice-arête, though how either he or Walter Hine could have regained the ridge he could not tell. Would any one of the party live to return to Courmayeur and tell the tale? But Garratt Skinner knew the risk he took, had counted it up long before ever he brought Walter Hine to Chamonix, and thought it worth while. He did not falter now. All through the morning, indeed, he had been taking risks, risks of which Walter Hine did not dream; with so firm and yet so delicate a step he had moved from crack to crack, from ice-step up to ice-step; with so obedient a response of his muscles, he had drawn himself up over the rounded rocks from ledge to ledge. He shouted again to Pierre Delouvain, and at the same moment began carefully to work backwards along the ice-arête. Pierre, however, hurried; Walter Hine heard the guide's voice behind him, felt himself steadied by his hands. He stooped slowly down, knelt upon the wall, then bestrode it.

'Now, forward,' cried Skinner, and he pulled in the rope. 'Forward! We cannot go back!'

Hine clung to the ridge; behind him Pierre Delouvain sat down and helped him about the waist. Slowly they worked themselves forward, while Garratt Skinner gathered in the rope in front. The wall narrowed as they advanced, became the merest edge which cut their hands as they clasped it. Hine closed his eyes, his head whirled, he was giddy, he felt sick. He stopped gripping the slope on both sides with his knees, clutching the sharp edge with the palms of his hands.

'I can't go on! I can't,' he cried, and he reeled like a novice on the back of a horse.

Garratt Skinner worked back to him.

'Put your arms about my waist, Wallie! Keep your eyes shut! You shan't fall.'

Walter Hine clung to him convulsively. Pierre Delouvain steadied Hine from behind, and thus they went slowly forward for a long while. Garratt Skinner gripped the edge with his palms—so narrow was the ridge—the fingers of one hand pointed down one slope, the fingers of the other down the opposite wall. Their legs dangled.

At last Walter Hine felt Garratt Skinner loosening his clasped fingers from about his waist. Garratt Skinner stood up, uncoiled the rope, chipped a step or two in the ice and went boldly forward. For a yard or two further Walter Hine straddled on, and then Garratt Skinner cried to him :—

‘Look up, Wallie. It’s all over.’

Hine looked and saw Garratt Skinner standing upon a level space of snow in the side of the mountain. A moment later he himself was lying in the sun upon that level space. The famous ice-arête was behind them.

A. E. W. Mason.

*Running Water.*

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